



OVER **375** WINES **RATED 90+** IN THIS ISSUE

# WINE ENTHUSIAST<sup>®</sup>

MAGAZINE

OCTOBER 2010

THE  
**CHEF &  
SOMMELIER'S**  
GUIDE TO  
WINE & FOOD PAIRINGS ▶

**100  
POINTS!**

GET A TASTE OF  
SPAIN'S ROCKIN'  
RIBERAS

WHAT MAKES

*Gin*  
FROM PLYMOUTH  
SO SPECIAL? SEE  
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GOES GLOBAL

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THE  
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ISSUE

**CHEF  
ALAIN  
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SHARES HIS  
TRIUMPHS  
OF  
WINING  
& DINING

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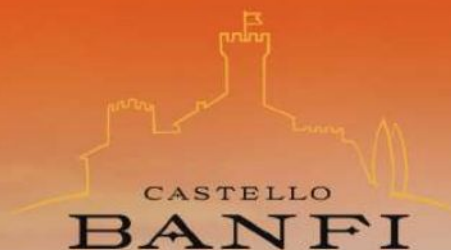
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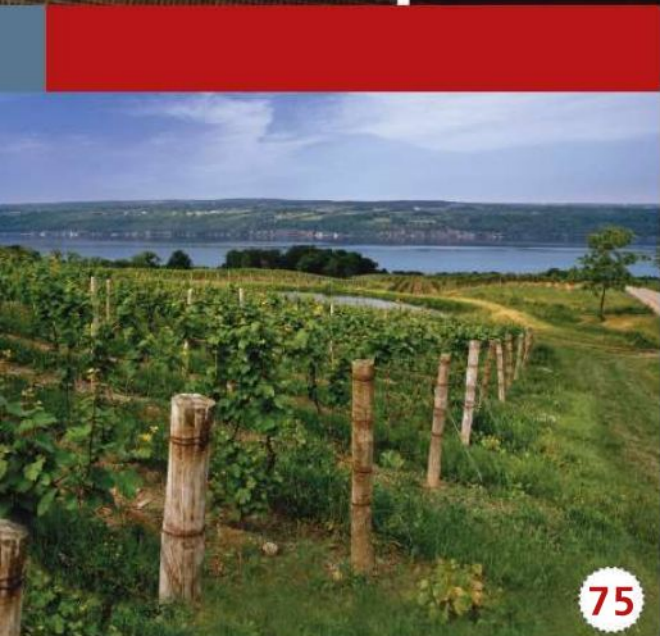
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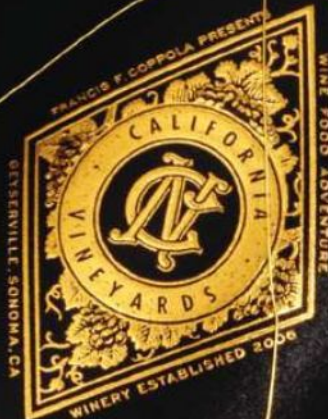
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## IN THIS ISSUE



Writer and film producer **Janet Forman's** ("The Chef and Sommelier's Guide to Wine and Food Pairing") first efforts at food and drink criticism began at age three when she took to tormenting the kitchen staff of her grandparents' hotel. More recent efforts have garnered two Lowell Thomas Gold Medals, awards from SOLAS, the governments of Belgium and South Africa, a Bill Muster Award for photography and the Journalist of the Year 2000 honor from the Pacific Asia Travel Association. Her work appears in *Travel+Leisure* editions worldwide, *Prestige* magazine, the *Globe and Mail* and *Business Traveler*. [janetforman.com](http://janetforman.com)



**Michael Schachner** ("Ribera del Duero: A Region on the Rise") has worked with *Wine Enthusiast Magazine* since 1997, initially as a senior editor and for the last nine years as a contributing editor. He lives in New York City and frequently travels to Spain and South America as well as the burgeoning wine markets of Argentina and Chile. When not tasting and rating wines for the *W.E.*, Schachner enjoys spending time with his wife at their second home in Hudson, NY, and following his favorite NYC sports teams: the Yankees, Jets, Rangers and, sadly, the Knicks.



**Monica Lerner** ("La Bella Moda") reviews Italian wines for the magazine and has lived in Italy on and off since age 11. Based in Rome, Monica and her dog Tappo are always on the move, reporting wine stories from her adopted home. Her books include *In Love in Italy* (Rizzoli) and *Living, Studying and Working in Italy* (Henry Holt) and she is now writing a guide to travel in Italy from the slow lane. Monica is a sommelier with the Italian Association of Sommelier (AIS) but her passion for wine finds roots in Lerner Vineyard, the family-run winery in Santa Barbara. She returns to California each year for harvest, pruning and tractor driving.



**Tim Moriarty** ("Does Vintage Matter?") is celebrating his tenth year as managing editor of *Wine Enthusiast Magazine*. Tim got his start in publishing with comic books and a movie magazine at Warren Publishing in New York City. He was managing editor of *Chocolatier* and *Pastry Art & Design* magazines prior to joining *Wine Enthusiast*. He is the co-author of a series of dessert-pastry books, including *Chocolate Passion* and *Grand Finales*, and is co-author of the *Wine Enthusiast Wine and Food Pairings Cookbook*. He is the author of two novels: *Vampire Nights* (Pinnacle) and *The Geezer Elite*, which is now available on [amazon.com](http://amazon.com).

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## BRAVE NEW WORLD OF WINE & FOOD

Is there anything new to say about the marvelous interaction of wine with fine food? Yes, when you consider the innovations by creative chefs and the variety on display in adventurous wine lists.

**W**

ine is what we celebrate in every issue of *Wine Enthusiast*—wine in all its delicious, complex glory. But wine's true splendor can best be explored when enjoyed with food, and that is the subject of several of the articles in this issue.

We encourage our readers to drink what they like and to be confident in their palates but at the same time to be willing to branch out, try something new, and nowhere is that willingness to bend and venture more important than when there's fine food on the table. Say you've waited months to snag a reservation at the hottest restaurant in town; their poached salmon with dill is legendary. Then you discover there's a well-priced Médoc grand cru on the wine list you've sought all your adult life. You know the wine is going to overwhelm the delicacy of the dish. What to do?

The matching of wine and food as an intellectual and sensual pursuit is nothing new, although it should be noted that *Wine Enthusiast* was among the first to make that exercise a regular part of its content. We instituted the Pairings column back in 1996, and in the intervening years have presented thousands of great recipes and wine suggestions, with clear explanations of why they work together. In 2008, we published the *Wine Enthusiast Wine and Food Pairings Cookbook* (Running Press), and it's still selling.

Our readers are familiar with many of the basics—that tannins, acids, sweetness and other factors can enhance the pleasure we take in enjoying certain dishes, or diminish it; likewise, that certain dishes can change the flavor and body of a great wine so dramatically it will make it taste like the harshest plonk—or the greater-than-greatest nectar ever sipped; that discussing the various permutations with a sommelier or server can enhance the restaurant experience.

And there are very exciting new trends to report on. In “The Chef and Sommelier's Guide to Wine and Food Pairings” (page 43), Janet Forman interviews some of the top chef-sommelier teams in some of the country's great, innovative restaurants. The chefs are pushing the envelope in terms of food presentation while the sommeliers must adhere to the science of wine-food interaction. How they resolve these issues for their customers makes for some great reading. On page 68, Executive Editor Susan Kostrzewa presents a Pairings article I can confidently say is like no other you've seen recently, based on her experiences at South Africa's safari game lodges: recipes using

game meats like ostrich and springbok, paired with the fascinating wines of South Africa. If ostrich is not readily available at your local grocery, be assured that substitutions are offered.

On page 22, Sandy Block, MW, of Legal Seafoods, draws on his expertise training wine staff in advising readers on how to generate a useful dialogue so that the best wine for the dishes being ordered is brought to the table. On page 20, we present an interview with Anne-Sophie Pic, the great chef of a great French family of chefs. There are several other food-oriented articles in our Enth Degree section (starting on page 12) to whet your appetites.

Wine does just fine flying solo, of course, and this issue contains some great wine articles. Grenache is an undersung wine variety; it flies below many wine devotees' radar even though it's the most widely planted red variety in Spain (surprised?) and the star of some of the great wines of the world, including those of Châteauneuf-du-Pape. To be sure, Grenache is primarily the anchor of great blends from Australia, California and elsewhere—it's the “G” in GSMs you are increasingly seeing at retail and on restaurant wine lists. There are some fine wine recommendations in our global take on Grenache (page 34).

On page 58, Paul Gregutt profiles the aromatic white wines of the Pacific Northwest—Riesling, Gewürztraminer, Pinot Gris and Pinot Blanc. The region shares many of the climate characteristics of the regions where these varieties produce world-class wines, such as Alsace, the Rheingau and the Northern Rhône. If you're not familiar with these styles, you'll find profiles and recommendations for wines with fruity, floral and spicy flavors and knife-edge acidity that will open a whole new world of flavor.

The emergence of such varieties and their growing acceptance is testament to the venturesome palates of American wine devotees. We live in an exciting time for wine. Restaurants are increasingly seeking out boutique wines and obscure varieties to spice up their wine lists, while their chefs are creating dishes that were undreamed of just a few years ago. Who's for some roast chicken on edible paper?

Cheers!

Editor & Publisher

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—SUSAN KOSTRZEWA



## POP THE CORK

2010 is proving a good year for notable New York wine bars.

An apt reflection of what's happening across the country in wine consumption, New York City has been host to a crop of notable wine bar openings in 2010. Here are a few of our favorites, perfect for ticking off on your next visit to the city:

**Anfora.** Backed by the talented crew at the still-buzzy trattoria Dell'Anima (located just down the street), this stylish West Village wine bar emphasizes biodynamic and organic wines carefully chosen by beverage director Joe Campanale, as well as an impressive whiskey, beer, bubbly and grappa list. Chefs Gabe and Katherine Thompson mix it up with simple but delicious dishes like lamb ragu sliders and Italian heroes. [anforanyc.com](http://anforanyc.com)

**Ardesia.** Soaring ceilings and hand-chalked slate walls grace this hip Hell's Kitchen newcomer. With 70 bottles (over 30 by the glass), co-owner Mandy Oser and Chef Amorette Casaus offer pairings like a fruity Hungarian Tricolis 2008 Cuvée with delicate quail egg toast, and spicy duck *bánh mì* with Botani 2008 Moscatel Seco from southern Spain. [ardesia-ny.com](http://ardesia-ny.com)

**Bar Pleiades.** Chef Daniel Boulud's reign continues with Café Boulud's younger sister, an elegant combination of Art Deco, Empire, and Op Art on the upper East Side. The 800-bottle list includes a crisp Henriot "Millesime" 1998 Champagne, and a refreshing SA Prum Urziger Wurzgarten 2006 Riesling. Sommelier Emanuel Moosbrugger's glass list changes frequently; fall

features flights of Burgundies. Charcuterie from Bar Boulud and small plates from the Café round out the menu. [danielnyc.com](http://danielnyc.com)

**Socarrat Bar de Vinos.** Vallodolid, Spain native Lolo Manso has captured the energy and flavors of his hometown's famed tapas bars in Socarrat Paella Bar's stylish Chelsea twin. Standouts from the all-Spanish list are a rich Pago de Los Capellanes 2008 Tinto, and Abadia Retuerta 2006 Tempranillo, with black cherry notes. Somontano-born Sommelier Nacho Monclus is behind the bar most nights, and he will gladly suggest wine pairings for the bar's authentic tapas. [socarratbardevinos.com](http://socarratbardevinos.com)

—MIKE DESIMONE AND JEFF JENSSEN



ILLUSTRATION MICHAEL DELAPORTE



## PARANORMAL PARTY

Eternal cocktail hour lives on at these historic watering holes.

Most imbibers expect to find spirits at the bar, but these haunts purportedly offer ghosts in addition to alcohol. Here's the dish on the most ghost-friendly bars and restaurants in the United States, just in time for Halloween.

Long before Hemingway frequented this Key West bar, **Captain Tony's Saloon** ([capttonyssaloon.com](http://capttonyssaloon.com)) was used as an ice house, and by default, the area's morgue, in the 1700s. In addition to a gravestone embedded in the bar's floor, this saloon also features a "hanging tree"—the site where a handful of pirates were killed by vigilantes (explaining the bar's popular drink, the Pirate's Punch).

Some say that the **Hotel Monteleone** ([hotelmonteleone.com](http://hotelmonteleone.com)), home of the famous Carousel Bar in New Orleans (below), is so nice that some guests never leave—even after

death. The International Society of Paranormal Research detected a dozen spirits in this French Quarter hotel in 2003, and numerous visitors have reported sightings of a young boy, Maurice Begere, who died on the hotel's 13th floor in the late 1880s.

The supernatural abounds at the historic **Bowers Harbor Inn** ([missiontable.net](http://missiontable.net)) restaurant in Traverse City, Michigan. The Inn was built in the 1880s for Chicago lumber baron J.W. Stickney as a summer home, and legend has it that his wife Genevieve hanged herself in the building's elevator shaft after learning that her husband bequeathed his fortune to his mistress. Genevieve sometimes appears as a woman with a bun in gilded mirrors, mysteriously moving furniture, or making the sound of footsteps.

—ALEXIS KORMAN



BOTTLE PHOTOS: JON VAN GORDER

## TOP Shelf

Here's a look at this month's top-scoring Cellar Selection, Editors' Choice and Best Buy. For full tasting notes on these and hundreds of other wines, turn to our Buying Guide, which begins on **page 75**.

### Cellar Selection

**96 Altesino 2004 Riserva (Brunello di Montalcino); \$80.** This is a stunning wine with loads of character that peels off as aromatic layers of cherry, cassis, soapy wild flowers, violets, earth, cola and church incense. There's a sweet spice element of cinnamon and nutmeg, and all the flavors last long on the finish. It's tempered, elegant and smooth overall. Imported by Winebow. —M.L.



### Editors' Choice

**95 Trinchero 2007 Cloud's Nest Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Mount Veeder); \$50.** A lovely Cabernet, brimming with complex blackberry, cherry, mineral, tobacco and cedar flavors that impress for their sheer power. Shows the firm, hard tannins this mountain always lends Cabs, but they're so finely ground, the wine is drinkable now with a good decanting. Should age well for a decade. —S.H.



### Buy Buy

**91 Arbor Crest 2009 Dionysus Vineyard Riesling (Columbia Valley); \$8.** This is fruit sourced from a 1972 planting; single-vineyard, old-vine Riesling at an amazing price. Done in a big, round, fruity, off-dry style, it's loaded with sweet pineapple, Meyer lemon and honeyed peach flavors. The fruit concentration is spectacular, and yet the wine retains enough acidity to feel balanced against the 3.5% residual sugar. Serve with hot and spicy Asian fare, or with a peach cobbler for dessert. —P.G.





# La Bella Moda

In Italy, wine and fashion make a stylish, and powerful, pairing.

**S**tyle icon Coco Chanel once famously cooed that “fashion is not something that exists in dresses only. Fashion is in the sky, in the street, fashion has to do with ideas, the way we live, what is happening.” In Italy, fashion extends into the wine world, and the two cultures are overlapping more than ever.

Wine and fashion in Italy are linked by a generation of fashion designers and moguls, who not only express themselves in terms of color, texture and fabric, but in terms of grape variety, cellaring and territory. Together, the two industries represent the pinnacle of Italian export success: wine is Italy’s number one gastronomic export and fashion is among the country’s top exports overall. In the U.S. alone, Italy sells some 1.3 billion euros (\$1.7 billion) in wine and 6.5 billion euros (\$8.4 billion) in fashion each year.

“The world recognizes Italy for two things: fashion and wine-food,” says Villa Sandi owner Giancarlo Moretti Pologato. Villa Sandi is a first-rate producer of Prosecco sparkling wine and Giancarlo’s brother, Mario, founded the popular footwear company Geox. “They are our patrimony and symbols of ‘Made in Italy’ excellence,” he adds.

Who are the players in the wine-fashion crossover? The extended **Ferragamo** family has diverse wine holdings. The enormous patrimony of the former Florentine shoe cobbler now includes the Il Borro estate and winery near Arezzo in Tuscany. Owned by Ferruccio Ferragamo and managed by his son Salvatore, the 1,755-acre property boasts Merlot, Syrah, Cabernet Sauvignon and Sangiovese vineyards. Chairman Massimo Ferragamo owns a 4,500-acre private membership estate in Montalcino called Castiglion del Bosco and presents a bold and modern vineyard-designate Brunello di Montalcino named Campo del Drago.

Diesel founder **Renzo Rosso** makes wines, Bianco di Rosso with

Chardonnay, Rosso di Rosso with Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot, and Nero di Rosso with Pinot Nero. His 250-acre property is located in Marostica, which is in the Veneto region of northern Italy.

In 2007, eccentric fashion designer Roberto Cavalli and son Tommaso celebrated the debut of his new super Tuscan red from the Tenuta degli Dei, located in Panzano (in the Chianti Classico region). His upper range wine **Cavalli Collection** wine comes in a leopard-skin box with the initials “RC” embossed on the front.

Fashion mogul Antonio Moretti (partner of Miuccia Prada’s husband) is coproprietor of the “Car Shoes” brand and owns the **Tenuta Sette Ponti**, which produces one of Italy’s best super Tuscan blends called Oreno. Moretti also owns a wine estate in Sicily called Feudo Maccari.

Ottavio **Missoni**, the designer from Trieste known for his uniquely patterned knitwear, owns wine properties in the Langhe, Piedmont and Sicily.

“Our family started in wine and then moved into fashion,” says Giancarlo Moretti Pologato of Villa Sandi, who has also played an important role in the recent legal changes to protect the geographic origins of the popular bubbly wine Prosecco. “In most cases it goes the other way. Some start in fashion and then move into wine as part of a lifestyle choice.”

One of the most significant marriages between fashion and wine comes thanks to media tycoon Paolo Panerai. CEO of **Class Editori**, Panerai counts several fashion magazines and satellite television channels among his holdings. Attracted to the world of wine, the businessman owns two wine estates in Tuscany. The first is the historic Chianti Classico **Castellare di Castellina** estate. It produces a well-received Sangiovese-based wine called I Sodi di San Niccolò. Panerai also built a veritable cathedral of wine in Maremma, southern Tuscany, called

**Rocca di Frassinello** in a joint venture with Domain Baron De Rothschild-Lafite. Architect Renzo Piano was hired to design the winery’s amphitheater-like cellar, which remains among the most impressive in Italy from a design point of view.

In Sicily, Panerai directly involved Italy’s biggest names in fashion—Versace, Valentino, Missoni, Carolina Marengo, Alberta Ferretti and Gianfranco Ferré. Under Panerai’s Feudi del Pisciotto line is a Valentino Merlot, a Nero d’Avola designed by Donatella Versace, a Cabernet Sauvignon by Missoni and a *passito* dessert wine by Ferré. For the extended story, go to [WineMag.com/Moda](http://WineMag.com/Moda)

—MONICA LARNER



PHOTO: TANAKA/SHUTTERSTOCK; OPPOSITE PAGE ILLUSTRATION: MICHAEL DELAPORTE





## VINO ARGENTINO

### An Insider's Guide to the Wines and Wine Country of Argentina

Part of the fourth generation of an Argentine-Italian winemaking family, Laura Catena's résumé reads as follows: daughter of the so-called Godfather of modern Argentinean wine; dedicated wife and mother; emergency room physician in San Francisco; president of Bodega Catena Zapata; owner of her own wine label called LUCA; and now author of the quintessential guide to everything one might want to know about Argentinean wine, food, travel and the lifestyle that goes with it.

Out this October from Chronicle Books, and just in time to celebrate the fact that Argentina recently surpassed neighboring Chile as the leading South American wine exporter to the United States, *Vino Argentino—An Insider's Guide to the Wines and Wine Country of Argentina* (\$27.50) offers anyone intrigued by Argentina's burgeoning wine lifestyle a look into the personalities, cuisine and various wines and terroirs that have propelled Argentina to the forefront of New World wine.

With a foreword by Jay Miller of the Wine Advocate and myriad eye-catching photos by Sara Remington, *Vino Argentino* takes readers through Catena's home province of Mendoza and its various subzones as well as to southerly Patagonia and northerly Salta. Along the way are profiles of key wine personalities like her father Nicolás, the traveling American winemaker Paul Hobbs and locals including Roberto de la Mota and José Alberto "Pepe" Zuccardi; a primer on Malbec, Argentina's hallmark grape variety; and recipes for classic Argentine foods such as empanadas, milanesas (fried veal cutlets) and rib eye steak with chimichurri.

The book also spells out Argentina's wine history and takes us to the roaring present, where annual wine export numbers have been climbing by 30 to 40 percent per year and nearly a half million Americans annually are visiting Argentina to experience Buenos Aires, the "Paris of South America," as well as Mendoza, the heart of Argentina's booming wine industry.

"This book is my personal invitation for you to visit and experience my country, Argentina," writes Catena in her introduction. And after reading through the book's 240 pages, you too may feel as though it's time to pay a visit to Mendoza, what Catena terms the "land of sun and wine."

—MICHAEL SCHACHNER



## DRINK LIKE AN EMPEROR

When it came to wine, Napoleon coveted the bubbly and the sweet.

Wine-loving Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte once said, "In victory you deserve Champagne; in defeat you need it." Vinophiles interested in reliving Bonaparte's famous (and infamous) past can still drink like he did. Historians agree he had three favorite wines, all of which are still being made: Moët & Chandon Champagne, South Africa's Vin de Constance and the wines of Chambertin, from the Burgundy region of France.

Napoleon's first recorded shipment of Moët & Chandon was in 1801, and he made many visits to the Champagne house in Épernay over the years. A plaque at the entrance of the cellars reads: "...The Great Emperor of the French toured these cellars guided by Mr. Jean Remy Moët, 26 July, 1807." Bonaparte also loved Chambertin wines, claiming that "nothing makes the future look so rosy as to contemplate it through a glass of Chambertin."

During his final exile on the island of St. Helena, Napoleon had nearly 300 gallons of Vin de Constance, the sweet, nutty dessert wine of South Africa's Constantia region, shipped to him yearly. On his deathbed, Napoleon refused all other food and drink offered him, requesting only a single glass of Vin de Constance. Adam Mason, head winemaker at Klein Constantia, recreates the sweet nectar with an awareness of the historical tradition of this great wine. For more information on the wines, go to [moet.com](http://moet.com), [kleinconstantia.com](http://kleinconstantia.com) and [burgundy-wines.fr](http://burgundy-wines.fr).

—M.D. & J.J.



## GEEK Speak

### PUNT

"Punt" is the trade term for the indentation at the bottom of a wine bottle. Also called a kick-up, its actual purpose is a subject of ongoing debate among oenophiles. There's any number of theories: depending on who you ask, a punt's purpose is to snag sediment, bend light for shelf appeal, create volumetric deception to convince consumers they're getting more wine or simply stabilize the bottle on the table. Others attribute a practical purpose: to notch onto pegs fitted on bars and bottling lines to hold bottles in place—leaving one to wonder which came first, the kick-up or the peg. The most likely story, however, is that it's a matter of nostalgia, a residual homage to the dimple inevitably created when bottles were hand blown. —E.J. KELLEY





## AUSTRALIAN HIRAMASA CRUDO WITH FENNEL SALAD & TANGERINE OIL

1500 Ocean Chef Brian Sinnott's California coastal cuisine tantalizes taste buds while showcasing sustainable seafood. This is exemplified by his raw preparation of Hiramasa, Australian yellowtail tuna procured from Clean Fish Seafood ([cleanfish.com](http://cleanfish.com)), a company dealing only in seafood reeled in from sustainable sources. On top of being ecologically responsible, the fish is of the highest quality and Sinnott dresses it with subtle touches of fruit and spice. [dine1500ocean.com](http://dine1500ocean.com)

—BRANDON HERNÁNDEZ

8 ounces Hiramasa (Australian yellowtail tuna)  
1 teaspoon sea salt (preferably Maldon)  
½ ounce tangerine oil  
2 tablespoons baby fennel, shaved  
1½ tablespoons pomegranate seeds  
1 teaspoon mint, julienned  
¼ Espelette chili powder

Arrange the fish in a single row down the center of a chilled small oval plate. Sprinkle the fish with salt and drizzle with oil. In a small bowl, mix together the fennel, pomegranate and mint. Season with additional salt and oil to bring the mixture together. Place the fennel mixture in a line over the fish. Using a sifter, dust the entire dish with chili powder and serve immediately. *Serves 4.*

**Wine Recommendation:** From Ted Glennon, wine director/sommelier at the Hotel Del Coronado, the fermented in the bottle, lightly sweet, low pressure Morimoto Brewery "Hou Hou Shu" 2010 Sparkling Sake offers banana peel and mouthwatering pears, and its bubbly and sweet character keeps the crudo in good company. Other winners: the Brundlmayer 2006 Gruner Veltliner or the Cold Heaven Vogelzang Vineyard 2008 Viogner.

## 1500 OCEAN, SAN DIEGO, CA

The Hotel Del Coronado ([hoteldel.com](http://hoteldel.com)) is more than an iconic spire on San Diego's sun-kissed horizon. It's also home to a fine dining gem that showcases the bounty of the sea with genuine class. Nestled in the heart of this historic property is 1500 Ocean, a seafood-centric eatery where wine and fish are food for thought, thanks to chef de cuisine Brian Sinnott.

Sinnott only utilizes fish and shellfish from sustainable sources and that conscientious approach pays off from both a humanitarian and flavor standpoint. The quality of such seafood is top notch, as are the locally farmed meats and produce that round out the restaurant's sumptuous bill of fare. The chef uses lessons learned growing up in a close-knit Italian family to add Mediterranean flair to his dishes, which are presented in an elegantly minimalistic fashion, a reflection of his straightforward preparations. For example, his Arctic char tartare is brought to life with fresh green apple and lemon crème fraîche.

Collaborating with wine director Ted Glennon (who is also the mind behind ENO, the hotel's modern wine tasting room), Sinnott holds elaborate pairing-focused banquets and wine education events centered around some of California's most renowned winemakers and many exceptional boutique wineries. Equally as inclusive is 1500 Ocean's wine list, which features classics from around the world and high quality varieties plucked from California's grapevines, making this a prime spot to eat, sip and savor the best the Golden State has to offer. —B. H.



PHOTOS TOP COURTESY HOTEL DEL CORONADO; BOTTOM ACESHOT/SHUTTERSTOCK



## DOES VINTAGE MATTER?

Austin Hope is betting that it's of small interest to consumers, at least in California.

"Champagne has been doing this forever. We are trying to fight the stigma," says Austin Hope of his Candor wines—the stigma being customer (and industry) reluctance to accept wines that are blends across vintage.

Hope (right) is the president and winemaker of Hope Family Wines in Paso Robles, California, which is the home of three brands in addition to Candor: Treana, Liberty School and Austin Hope Wines. Under the Candor label, he is producing a Merlot, Zinfandel and a rosé.

"With Candor, we are blending across vintages but also regions," says Hope. The Lot 2 Candor Zinfandel blends fruit grown in Paso and Lodi, while the Lot 2 Merlot incorporates fruit from Paso Robles and Santa Barbara, and both wines are 50–50 blends of the '07 and '08 vintages. "The idea," says Hope, "is to combine youthful, vibrant fruit with enhanced complexity and drinkability for a sincere, true expression of each grape."

Hope is particularly keen on achieving something distinctive with Merlot. "We recognized that Merlot has been beat up and bashed up and we wanted to reintroduce it," he says. "It's a great wine but when it took off back in the day—fueled by the French Paradox story—it was planted in the wrong places. It's very site specific. It's noble,



like Cab, but we're in California so we do everything in extremes. The wines were green, herbaceous, thin, grassy. Merlot is supposed to have tannic weight and richness. We've concentrated on tannin development to make a rich, pleasing wine at 15% alcohol."

Fifty-five families farm for Hope, and he knows them all. "We use quality fruit and the most expensive wood to make the best possible \$20 Merlot and Zin possible," he says. The '07 lots were barrel aged for 12 months, while the '08s were in barrel for six months.

With that focus on quality, and his belief that California is less prone to vintage variation than other wine-growing regions in the world, he expects that vintage won't matter. "Consumers don't care about vintage," he asserts. "Gatekeepers are more concerned with the vintage and the traditional ways of doing things than the consumers." *austinhope.com*

—TIM MORIARTY



## We Pick Our Top 10 Wines for \$10 and Under

Once friends and neighbors find out we work at *Wine Enthusiast*, the first question they ask is almost invariably, "So, what's a great \$10 Chardonnay?"

Although these wines may not be Chardonnay, they do represent the best of the inexpensive wines we've tasted for this issue, selected for price and quality, and balanced to give a selection of wine styles. Remember, you can always visit our online Buying Guide at *winemag.com* to search more than 5,000 wines we've named Best Buys in the past.

**88 Chateau Ste. Michelle 2009 Riesling (Columbia Valley); \$9. Best Buy. —P.G.**

**88 Oxford Landing 2007 GSM Grenache-Shiraz-Mourvèdre (South Australia); \$8. Imported by Negociants USA, Inc. Best Buy. —J.C.**

**88 Ste. Chapelle 2008 Dry Riesling (Snake River Valley); \$8. Best Buy. —P.G.**

**87 Borsao 2009 Viña Borgia (Campo de Borja); \$6. Imported by Fine Estates From Spain. Best Buy. —M.S.**

**87 Finca del Marquesado 2006 Crianza (Rioja); \$10. Imported by CIV/USA. Best Buy. —M.S.**

**87 Line 39 2009 Sauvignon Blanc (Lake County); \$10. Best Buy. —S.H.**

**87 Marqués de Cáceres 2009 Rosé (Rioja); \$9. Imported by Vineyard Brands. Best Buy. —M.S.**

**87 Novy Cellars 2008 Four Mile Creek (North Coast); \$9. Best Buy. —S.H.**

**86 Bodegas Palacio 2007 Glorioso (Rioja); \$10. Imported by HAB North America. Best Buy. —M.S.**

**86 Bodegas y Vinedos de Jalón 2008 Viña Alarba Old Vines Grenache (Calatayud); \$10. Imported by The Artisan Collection. Best Buy. —M.S.**







## PASSION INSPIRED BY PLACE

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## THE ART OF EATING

San Francisco's museums are focusing time and talent on wine and food.

Forget about that cheeseburger and iceberg lettuce salad when plotting your next art outing; museum cafés have gone upscale in San Francisco. "The city's museums now are culinary destinations, offering visitors world-class menus along with their collections," says Tanya Houseman, media manager for the San Francisco Convention and Visitor's Bureau.

Celebrity chefs are collaborating with museum kitchens to reinvent menus. Among them, Charles Phan of The Slanted Door offers his spring rolls and steamed buns at the **California Academy of Sciences Academy Café** ([calacademy.org](http://calacademy.org)), the less formal of that museum's three restaurants. Wolfgang Puck, whose Postrio restaurant helped usher in San Francisco's modern era of California cuisine, oversees the fare at the new **Walt Disney Family Museum** ([disney.go.com](http://disney.go.com)), in the Presidio National Park.

Often, dishes are crafted to reflect the museums' ever-changing exhibits. When the **de Young Museum** ([deyoung.famsf.org](http://deyoung.famsf.org)) had its King Tut show, the team at the sought-after McCalls Catering and Events crafted Middle Eastern fare. At the **Museum of Modern Art's Caffé Museo** ([sfmoma.org](http://sfmoma.org)), specialty Mexican food was the focus during the Frida Kahlo show. Pastry chef Caitlin Freeman's whimsical desserts pay homage to artists in the permanent collection there, too, such as the Jeff Koons white hot chocolate



with gold leaf (inspired by Koons' Michael Jackson and Bubbles sculpture), the Wayne Thiebaud cake and Richard Diebenkorn trifle.

Museum wine lists also reflect the increasing quality of the food. At the de Young, Clos du Val created a limited edition 2007 Pinot Noir to serve during the current Impressionism exhibit and a Post-Impressionism show slated for Fall. **The Moss Room's** ([themossroom.com](http://themossroom.com)) wine list offers prestige bottlings: '95 Heidsieck "Diamant Bleu," Failla Viognier, Peter Michael "Les Pavots." At the **Boudin Sourdough Museum's** ([boudinbakery.com](http://boudinbakery.com)) Bistro Boudin—a sort of restaurant within a museum, or vice versa—the wine list is wide-ranging and upscale, to wash down fancy comfort food, like fish tacos, filet mignon and beef stew, in this fun attraction at Fisherman's Wharf.

In most cases, paid admission to the museum is not required to dine, and not all museum restaurants are open for dinner seven nights a week. —STEVE HEIMOFF



PHOTOS TOP COURTESY THE WALT DISNEY FAMILY MUSEUM; ED KELLEY

PASSION  
INSPIRED  
BY PLACE

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# Q&A WITH Anne-Sophie Pic

**GROUNDBREAKING FRENCH CHEF AND RESTAURATEUR**

France's first female three-Michelin-starred chef in 50 years riffs about culinary lineage, fighting her way to the top and why the cuisine, not the chef, should be the star.

**I**n a country dominated by testosterone-charged alpha chefs, Anne-Sophie Pic is France's only three-star Michelin chef, the first French female to receive three stars in more than 50 years, but the fourth generation of top Pic chefs from Valence in southeastern France. Her father and grandfather were also three-star chefs at the same restaurant in Valence where Anne-Sophie learned how to cook. Now, Anne-Sophie has opened a second restaurant, Anne-Sophie Pic au Beau-Rivage Palace inside the famous hotel in Lausanne, Switzerland. Here, she presides over a dedicated staff of 25, serving her famous specialties in her eponymous restaurant overlooking Evain-les-Bains across Lake Lemman. Pic has designed both the food and the space in a contemporary warm and cozy yet elegant style. Each table's simple Baccarat vase holds tea roses, a Baccarat oil lamp and Limoges plates.

**Wine Enthusiast:** How did cooking become so important to four generations of Pics?

**Anne-Sophie Pic:** My great grandfather often went hunting with his friends and he brought the game home to his wife, my great grandmother, Sophie, to cook. Sophie became passionate about cooking and opened a bistro. She taught her son, my grandfather Andre, how to cook, and he took over her restaurant and became famous for crayfish gratin. In 1934, he was one of only five Michelin three-star French chefs. Next, my father, Jacques, took over and was famous for his sea bass with caviar. In 1973, Jacques earned his three Michelin stars. My brother Alain, who hoped to become the next chef/owner, studied under my father. I was 10 years younger and not interested in cuisine.

**WE:** Why not?

**AP:** My room was right over the kitchen, so I needed to breathe new air. I wanted to experience something different, so I went to business school first in Paris, and then in New York. My first job was an internship in Tokyo in the marketing department of Moët Chandon. I was fascinated by champagne and learned it from beginning to the end. Then, I went to Paris and did marketing for Yves St. Laurent. I wanted to experience the world of luxury products, but saw that what I was interested in was *savoir faire*. I needed these experiences to acknowledge that I was more interested in creating with my hands. Creation was



TASTE IS STILL THE MOST IMPORTANT THING FOR ME. I LOVE TO PLAY WITH TEXTURES. I DON'T WANT TOO MANY INGREDIENTS IN THE PLATE. I WANT THE CUSTOMER TO TASTE EACH INGREDIENT.

very important and more compatible with my personality, so in 1992 I decided to return to Valence and learn how to cook from my father; but three months later, he died unexpectedly. I was 23-years-old and not appreciated in the kitchen. Alain was jealous and the chefs who had worked with my father refused to help me because I was a girl. It was difficult; I was the only female in the kitchen. One day I criticized one of the chefs working under me and he said, "You can't say anything to me because I knew you when you were a baby in diapers."

**WE:** Who taught you how to cook?

**AP:** I am self-taught. I learned by making, by doing it; it makes a difference. I am completely open-minded. I was also enriched by my experience in Japan—it opened my mind, I have a different way of thinking. My father was always talking about food, and he always tasted, so I grew up tasting food. He formed my palate, and taste is still the most important thing for me. I love to play with textures. I don't want too many ingredients

in the plate. I want the customer to taste each ingredient.

**WE:** Is the menu at Anne-Sophie Pic au Beau-Rivage Palace the same as at Restaurant Pic in Valence?

**AP:** Thirty percent of the menu in Lausanne is new and the rest is the same as in Valence. I want the cuisine to be the star, not me. I want to produce special new dishes; it's very important for me to use products of the region in Lausanne, I use fresh fish from Lake Lemman, local organic eggs, Simmental Beef and vegetables from local food producers.

**WE:** What is the main different between the two restaurants?

**AP:** In Valence, we are a family-run business. At Beau-Rivage, we're in a big beautiful palace and we are adapting to the place. We have our own culture but will also take part in their culture. We have a new clientele asking for things different than in Valence, and we have to adapt ourselves. I have to trust in my team for the service and the cuisine.

**WE:** Where do you see yourself in 10 years?

**AP:** Cooking is my passion. I hope that in 10 years I will be strong enough to be still in this job. I have a husband and a son.

**WE:** And your son? Will he be the next Pic to take over and earn three stars?

**AP:** Who knows? He is only three.

—MARGIE GOLDSMITH



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## INTERROGATE A SOMMELIER TODAY

Having a sense of your own taste while working with a sommelier will ensure that you get the bottle you want.

**Y**ou're relaxing at a restaurant, soaking up the vibe, feeling cool and leisurely turning the pages of the wine list. You're the alpha dog at the table, wine-wise, and your friends are letting you make the decisions. The sommelier appears, asking politely if he can be of service. Time stops as six sets of eyes narrow on you. You remember that everyone at the table is ordering a different dish. Do you know what questions to ask the sommelier?

Whether you're a wine pro or a novice, a brief to-the-point dialogue with a willing sommelier can be enjoyable, educational and, more to the point, assure that the right wine is served. Dealing properly with the wine staff can streamline the process and cut down on the antisocial exercise of burying your nose in the list.

From the insights gleaned over many years training staff, I have some thoughts on how this dialogue should go. First, the role of the wine staff. I discourage my staff from making personal recommendations, which the inexperienced will sometimes do in the interest of

expressing "authenticity." That is irrelevant unless your palate happens to match theirs. If asked for a recommendation, I train my staff to reply with questions that can narrow down the guest's specific preferences, and to offer a range of alternatives: "If you prefer a crisp, citric lighter-bodied white wine, may I recommend this..." or "If you'd enjoy a richer style wine with fuller body, this is also delicious."

I don't encourage this in my staff, but I know other wine service teams do it: they will ask food-related questions to tease out the guest's style preferences: How do you like your lobster, with a squeeze of lemon, or butter? (A leaner, high-acid style or something fuller, say, in a white.) How about coffee? Black or with cream and sugar? (To determine tolerance for tannins.)

What is your role as the diner? You should resist turning the encounter into a game of poker; just lay your cards on the table and ask direct questions; your odds of getting more satisfying results increase.

Here are some good conversation starters, ways to get the ball rolling: "Tell me about the..." "What type of wine would you recommend to best balance the..." "We're ordering the...and the...What would balance this combination of dishes?" If you only hear one wine recom-

**IF YOU SENSE THAT A MORE EXPENSIVE CHOICE IS BEING PUSHED WITHOUT ADEQUATE EXPLANATION AS TO WHAT MAKES IT SPECIAL, THAT'S A DANGER SIGN.**

mended in response to your question, ask for descriptions of a few others and how they compare. If the answers are not satisfactory, step it up a notch in directness. Ask "Why?" As in: "Why would this one be your preference?" or "What makes the wine a good match for these dishes?" If you sense that a more expensive choice is being pushed without adequate explanation as to what makes it special, that's a danger sign.

It helps to learn the basic descriptive vocabulary until it comes naturally. *Wine Enthusiast* readers will no doubt be comfortable saying something like, "We're interested in a refreshing, lighter dry white rather than anything buttery or oak-aged." Being confident in your vocabulary can reduce the amount of time your server spends fishing.

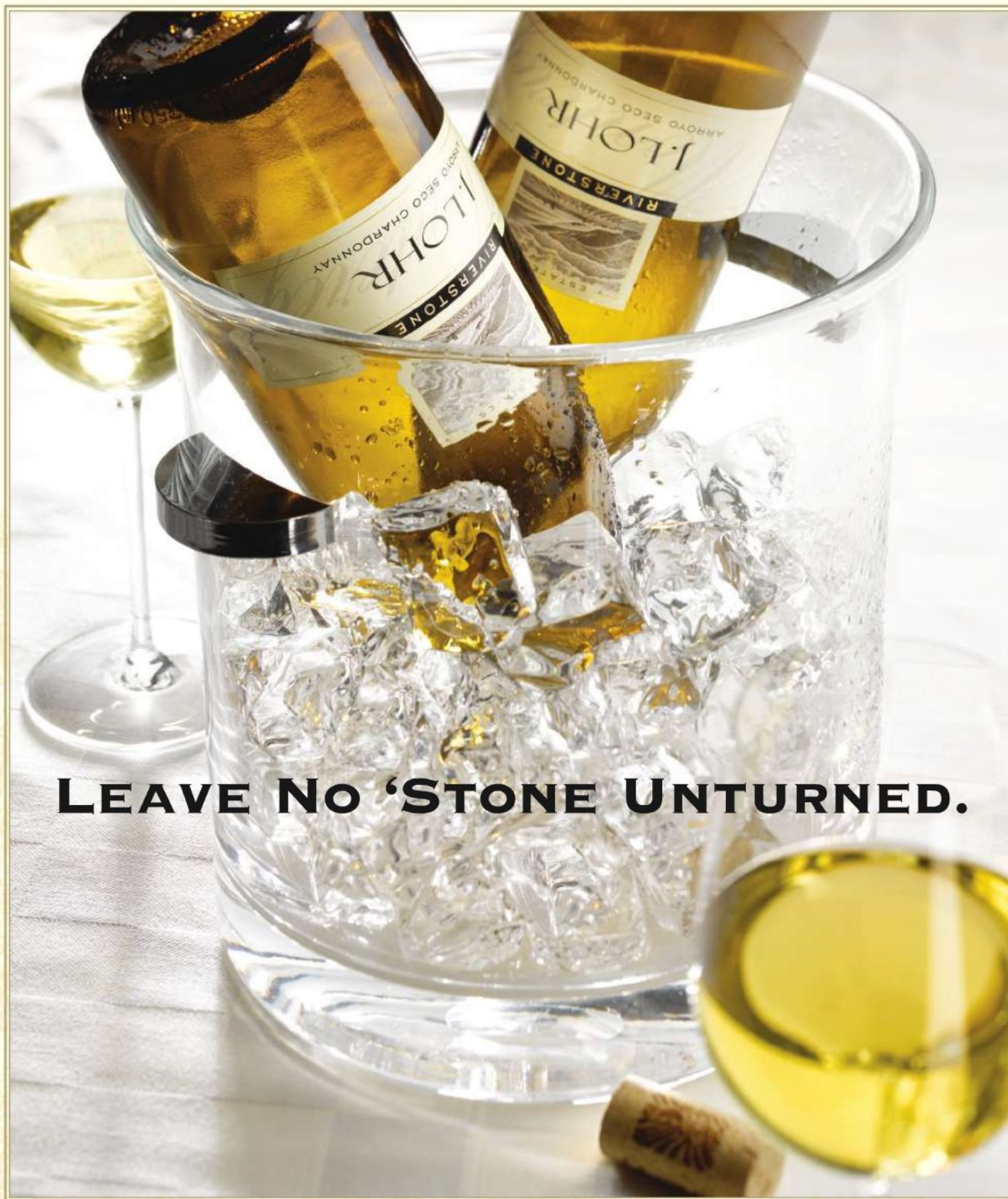
Use the list. Pointing a wine out and saying, "I've enjoyed this before but I'd like to try something new. What else would you recommend that's similar?" will help establish your stylistic preference—and by the way, pointing to a price out of view of your tablemates and quietly saying something like, "This is what I had in mind" helps discreetly establish your price point comfort zone.

The lesson: ordering wine is never an exact science; you won't always discover something new and delicious, but if you learn a few survival skills and prepare just a bit beforehand, you can dramatically increase your odds of enjoying a better restaurant wine experience.

*Sandy Block, MW, is the vice president of beverage operations for Legal Seafoods. He is a longtime Master of Wine, university educator, writer, editor and former sommelier.*







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## Paris

No matter how often one visits the French capital, exciting new discoveries await.

As students, we trek through Paris with a camera and little to no money. In the next stage of life, say as young lovers or honeymooning new-weds, we visit the City of Light largely for its romance. Only later on, after having already taken in the Louvre, Sacré Coeur, Eiffel Tower and Arc de Triomphe, do we start concentrating on the restaurants and shops that make Paris one of the world's greatest cities. For those in that third phase of getting to know Paris, we recommend a half-dozen restaurants and a trip to a multifaceted shopping emporium.

Since starting up last year, **Frenchie** (5, rue du Nil; [frenchie-restaurant.com](http://frenchie-restaurant.com)) has become a hot spot among Parisian and out-of-town foodies. Chef/owner Grégory Marchand trained with Jamie Oliver and at Gramercy Tavern in New York before opening this modern bistro. Lunch here might get going with a silky soup of fresh peas spiced by slivers of dried salami and softened with ricotta, or a colorful plate of warm carrots zested up by orange slices, avocado and coriander. The gnocchi with lamb ragout and the *églefín* (haddock) with smoked eggplant and piquillo peppers are both excellent main courses. The menu here is by the day, by the meal; so chances are your offerings will differ from the above depending on what Marchand feels like cooking. Make reservations at least a week or two in advance.

**Les Cocottes de Christian Constant** (135, rue Saint-Dominique; [lescocottesdeconstant.com](http://lescocottesdeconstant.com)) offers a perfect respite after beating back the busloads of tourists at the nearby Eiffel Tower. Constant is a master chocolatier who has branched out into owning restaurants; along one block of rue Saint-Dominique, he has a traditional café, a fine-dining establishment called *Le Violon d'Ingres* and *Les Cocottes*, which is a no-reservations *comptoir* (basically a counter) that specializes in soups, salads and one-dish meals served in heavy iron crocks called *cocottes*. It's airy and modern, with a menu that's easy to navigate and good wines by the glass, carafe or bottle.

For a break from all the butter and pâté you may be ingesting, **Thiou** (49, quai d'Orsay; [thiou.fr](http://thiou.fr)) serves modern Thai cuisine with some flair. The place is a celebrity/fashionista hangout

but the food is rock solid, while the wine list offers quality, such as Clément's Menetou-Salon and Faively's Clos des Myglands 1er Cru Mer-curey. The house specialty is *Le Tigre qui Pleure* (the Crying Tiger), a flank steak sliced thin and served with a traditional dipping sauce and shredded carrots.

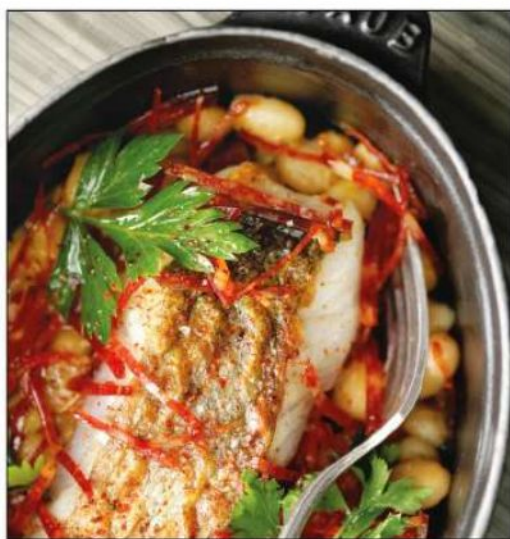
**La Fontaine Gaillon** (Place Gaillon; [la-fontaine-gaillon.com](http://la-fontaine-gaillon.com)) is co-owned by actor Gérard Depardieu, and it's a stylish, well-located place (near l'Opera) for creative, classic French cooking and good wines at reasonable prices. Our group of six enjoyed dishes like a mixed tartare of sea bream and salmon, sardines stuffed with Bayonne ham, and one of the very best pieces of fried fish ever to see a plate; the chef cleans a whole whiting, leaving on the head and tail, then lightly coats and fries the fish, yielding a greaseless, light-as-air success that comes with house-made tartar sauce and lemon wedges. *Delicieux* with a bottle of Vincent Dauvissat Les Forest 1er Cru Chablis.

**La Boule Rouge** (1, rue de la Boule Rouge; +33 01 48 00 07 69) is a long-standing Jewish-Tunisian restaurant in the scruffy 9th arrondissement. Couscous and a number of whole grilled fish are served in a well-worn environment that features a ceiling painting of the Sahara, vendors and musicians coming in off the street, and most likely a soccer game on the TV. The 10 or so bowls of dips, salads and pickled vegetables that await you if you've reserved ahead is a nice touch.

**Merci** (111, Boulevard Beaumarchais; [merci-merci.com](http://merci-merci.com)) offers surprisingly good snacks, wines by the glass and teas in its library/book-store/café. But this eclectic bazaar is best known for its collection of casual designer clothes, hats and shoes, kitchenware, baskets and pillows—you name it. It's one of the most diverse stores in Paris, one that's favored by the *Elle Décor* stylists we bumped into, as well as foreign journalists, i.e. the film crew that was there shooting for Spanish television.

And for something classic: **Les Botanistes** (11 bis, rue Chomel) is your textbook Parisian bistro: cozy and simple, with vinous staples ranging from Muscadet to Chinon to Beaujola-lais.

—MICHAEL SCHACHNER



Top to bottom: Diners at the *comptoir* inside Les Cocottes; Chef Constant's roasted white-fish with chorizo; Restaurateur Jean-Baptiste Gay and his wife, Virginie, of Les Botanistes.

PHOTOS TOP TWO CLAY MCLACHLAN/LES COCOTTES; BOTTOM, COURTESY PATRICIA WELLS.



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## SPIRIT | Realm

Exploring trends in cocktails, spirits and the stars behind the bar.



### OREGONIAN SPIRIT Head to Portland for top drams.

If only every city had a Distillery Row, as Portland, Oregon does. While many of the distillers clustered in the Pacific Northwest started life as microbrewers, Portland's craft distilleries have come into their own. Many utilize local materials—honey, grapes, pears—and all emphasize dedication to excellence.

**Aviation Gin.** Dry, cool, and spiced with juniper, cardamom, coriander, lavender, and sweet orange peel. Perfect for the classic Aviation cocktail and vintage gin cocktails. [aviationgin.com](http://aviationgin.com)

**Clear Creek Williams Pear Eau de Vie.** Made in the European tradition but using local produce, the pear brandy is a beautiful specimen, with a true pear flavor and fruit grown in the bottle. [clearcreekdistillery.com](http://clearcreekdistillery.com)

**Krogstad Aquavit.** Bracing and biting, flavored with star anise and caraway seed. [housespirits.com](http://housespirits.com)

**Rogue Spirits Dark Rum.** This smooth amber rum has become a cult favorite. We're also hearing favorable rumblings about Rogue's new Oregon Single Malt Whiskey. [rogue.com](http://rogue.com).

—KARA NEWMAN

### MUST-HAVES FOR THE ABSINTHE MINDED

In Belle Époque France, absinthe's popularity led the wine industry to campaign for its prohibition. It was said that drinking it could induce side effects from seizures to bouts of violent madness. The U.S. followed in the footsteps of many European countries and banned absinthe in 1912. The spirit's psychedelic reputation was eventually dismissed as myth, but thanks to the emergence of Bohemian absinthe in the 1990s, which traded on the spirit's trippy mystique, the lore around it persisted. Now that absinthe is legal again, craft distillers are trying to reshape people's perception of it. The following producers are at the forefront of this effort.

**Jade PF 1901.** This limited-edition release is distilled using antique alembic stills and historically accurate amounts of grande wormwood, as well as green anise. [absinthe-drink.com](http://absinthe-drink.com)

**Kübler.** This Swiss blanche is distilled from grande wormwood grown solely in the Val-de-Travers region of Switzerland. It's clear, having forgone the second maceration, which is how the green fairy traditionally gets its hue. [kublerabsinthe.com](http://kublerabsinthe.com)

**Meadow of Love.** A touch of violet imparts floral notes for a less traditional flavor profile often characterized as feminine. Produced in New York State using locally grown herbs, it's made in extremely small batches. [delawarephoenix.com](http://delawarephoenix.com)

**Pacifique.** Despite hailing from Washington wine country, this "verte," made with organic, locally sourced ingredients, is distilled using a French formula dating back to 1855.

[absinthe-pacifique.com](http://absinthe-pacifique.com)

**Duplais Blanche.** It got both its name and formula from a famous 19th century French distiller's manual calling for Swiss wormwood, green anise and Florence fennel seed. [duplais.de](http://duplais.de)

Absinthe should be imbibed at three to five parts water to one part spirit, or used sparingly in a cocktail, as was the pre-Prohibition custom.

—CHANTAL MARTINEAU



### BONAL GENTIANE QUINA MAKES A COMEBACK

Minnesota-based liquor importer Haus Alpenz's Eric Seed is a master at sleuthing obscure but great elixirs and bringing them to the attention of the American public. He recently improved the United States' vermouth lot 10-fold by shipping in the Dolin line. His latest find is Bonal Gentiane Quina (\$25), a French apéritif wine that has been made since 1865. It's treasured overseas, but disappeared from these shores around 1940. Now it's back. A Mistrelle base infused with gentian, cinchona and herbs found in the Grand Chartrreuse mountains, Bonal has a dry, bitter, bracing bite that unlocks the appetite. Hence its longtime nickname, "ouvre l'appetit" ("the key to the appetite") and the presence of a long skeleton key on the distinctive yellow label. Bonal is best appreciated straight, on the rocks or with a twist.

[alpenz.com](http://alpenz.com)

—ROBERT SIMONSON

### ON THE ROAD WITH BOLS

Bartending schools abound in the United States—but hardcore cocktailians often look to Amsterdam's mixology museum/bartending academy, the House of BOLS, for the latest trends in global imbibing. Amsterdam's innovative museum, the largest of its kind in Europe, is well-known for its colorful, interactive exhibits, like the Hall of Taste and Smell, where visitors can explore flavor profiles via taste tests and scents through air puffers perfumed with ingredients like white mint and coffee. The House of BOLS also lets visitors explore the culture of contemporary bartending in unique ways; including filming their own 'flairtending' movies and sipping drinks in a virtual nightclub space.

BOLS, a collection of 35 fruit-based liqueurs, has been around since the 16th century, but their current approach is

thoroughly modern, and now mobile. The BOLS traveling bartender academy, manned by some of the industry's heaviest hitters—mixologists Robe Rademaker, Tal Nadari, and Naren Young—landed in New Orleans in May 2010 and plans are in the works to bring the academy to other cities in the United States in 2011. [houseofbols.com](http://houseofbols.com).

—ALEXIS KORMAN







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involves guaranteeing the utmost transparency as regards the production and sale of Chianti, safeguarding 2,500 producers and their 15,000 hectares of vines and tracking the official tests and organoleptic controls required under Guaranteed Denomination of Origin status. We are dedicated to nurturing not only our region, but its great history too.

The Chianti Wine Consortium [www.consorziiovinochianti.it](http://www.consorziiovinochianti.it)





**Proof** Positive



**COCKTAIL** of the Month

## AVENIDA

"This was one of the first cocktails on the menu at RumBa, and it's been so popular that we have kept it on," says Wember Castillo. "This is the one we suggest when people just want a fruity drink. It's on the sweet side." The instructions call for shaking the drink, but Castillo advises that you can also roll it: once all ingredients are together, pour it from the mixing glass into a second, similar glass, and then pour it into the highball glass.

6 whole raspberries, plus garnish  
3 pineapple dice, plus garnish  
1½ ounce Clément Premium Cane Rhum  
¾ oz Mathilde Pêche (peach schnapps)  
1 ounce fresh sweet and sour

Place the fruit in a mixing glass and muddle briskly. Add the liquors, sweet and sour, and ice. Shake vigorously (or roll) and pour into a highball glass. Garnish with fresh pineapple dice and raspberries.



**MIXOLOGIST  
OF THE MONTH**

**Wember  
Castillo**

RumBa, InterContinental Hotel, Boston

Wember Castillo, the bartender at RumBa at the InterContinental Hotel, Boston, has 100 rums at his disposal, plus liqueurs, juices and a startling array of fruits, vegetables, herbs and spices. He can provide pretty much anything a customer asks for.

"I ask my guests, what do you like? What are your taste buds telling me?" He says that young bartenders often make the mistake of mixing to their own palates exclusively.

"If you have a great rum, it's perfect for sipping. You don't really need to mix it," he says, adding that, in general, the higher the alcohol, the more difficult it is to mix. The darker rums, more suitable for enjoying straight up, exhibit vivid molasses notes. As they lighten, they go more to caramel and spice.

The InterContinental is located on Boston's harbor at the Fort Point Channel—it adjoins the exact spot where the Boston Tea Party took place. The hotel chose a rum-themed bar due to Boston's long dependence on seafaring for its economy, and rum's historic importance. "We are bound to rum, it was so important to this area," Castillo says. (The name RumBa does not refer to the dance, but rather the way a Boston native would pronounce "rum bar.")

Castillo was born and raised in San Salvador. He came to the United States when he was 16, following his mother and sister to Boston. He began his restaurant career in 1996 as a bartender's assistant at the Hilton Hotel at Logan Airport. A year later, he was a bartender at the Boston Harbor Hotel, where he stayed for 10 years. He opened RumBa in 2006, and has seen its collection of rums (from the classic cane-growing countries as well as Austria, India and elsewhere) grow to 100.

If you're wondering what sort of name Wember is: "It came to my mother in a dream," he says. [intercontinentalboston.com](http://intercontinentalboston.com)

—TIM MORIARTY

PHOTO LEFT JON VAN GORDER; TOP MICHAEL PIAZZA PHOTOGRAPHY



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## STOCKING THE CELLAR WITHOUT BREAKING THE BANK

Think that cellaring wine is something reserved for the über-wealthy? Think again.

**I**t's true: Anyone with a lot of disposable income can stuff a wine cellar with first-growth Bordeaux, grand cru Burgundies, cult Cabernets and lauded super Tuscans. And if the goal is to show off for your golfing buddies and business associates, there's really no substitute. But if the goal is to impress friends and family with good taste and to enjoy the pleasures of aged wines, there's no need to spend the GDP of a small country. My cellar is living proof.

Sure, when I started collecting wine, I had those vivid fantasies of 30 years later pulling a cobwebbed bottle out of the cellar and blowing the dust off to reveal a legendary Bordeaux chateau's label. I even indulged in a couple of bottles that fit that description. But as someone who never won the lottery, and toiled in the editorial trenches of several publishing companies before arriving at *Wine Enthusiast* 11 years ago, I've never had the money to fill the cellar the way my friends in the financial sector did.

But I didn't let that stop me—and you shouldn't let it stop you. One of the fascinating aspects of collecting wine is the opportunity it gives to observe how different wines evolve over time, and there's no requirement that these wines be ultraexpensive. Despite a global trend towards more immediately drinkable wines, there are still many wines that benefit from cellaring. Here's a highly personal selection of affordable (\$30 or less) wines whose evolution should provide a decade or so of enjoyment, assuming proper storage.

Bordeaux is still the gold standard by which all other collectible wines are measured, but this list should give enough variety to please most palates.

**Cru Bourgeois Bordeaux.** The first cases of Bordeaux I ever purchased were cru bourgeois: 1986 Château Meyney and Château Chasse-Spleen. For under \$150 per case, they were what I could afford on my \$18,000 annual salary. Those estates and others like them continue to offer good value in wines that should evolve for 10–15 years from the vintage. Chateaus to look for: Chasse-Spleen, Lanessan, Meyney, Potensac, Poujeaux.

**Cru Beaujolais.** Avoid Beaujolais nouveau, and focus on wines from the most ageworthy crus: Fleurie, Morgon and Moulin-à-Vent. Wines from these regions are often said to *pinote*, that is, to become like aged Pinot Noir. Since most premier cru Burgundies have become prohibitively expensive, these are worthy alternates. Producers to look for: Brun (Moulin-à-Vent), Château des Jacques (Morgon, MâV), Coudert (Fleurie), Descombes (Morgon), Diochon (MâV),

Duboeuf (Fleurie, Morgon, MâV), Fessy (MâV), Lapierre (Morgon).

**Loire Cabernet Franc.** The wines of Bourgueil and Chinon are foremost in this category. While some cuvées are made for early drinking, others can age 10 or more years easily. These take on some wonderfully pungent, tobacco-like notes with age. Producers to look for: Amiraault, Baudry, Breton, Couly-Dutheil, Joguet, Raffault.

**Côtes du Rhône Villages.** Many of these wines are meant to be consumed within the first few years after the vintage, but those from top producers, particularly cuvées incorporating large proportions of Syrah or Mourvèdre, can go 10-plus years. Look also for wines from Rasteau, recently promoted to cru status. Producers to look for: Alary (Cairanne), Escaravilles (Rasteau), La Font du Vent (Signargues), La Soumade (Rasteau), L'Oratoire Saint-Martin (Cairanne), Mourchon (Séguret)

**Chianti Classico.** Super Tuscans and Brunello di Montalcino may get all the headlines, but for solid examples of Tuscan Sangiovese, there's no need to pay for the marquee names. Producers to look for: Felsina, Fontodi, Monsanto, Rocca della Macie, Volpaia

**Rioja.** For wines capable of aging up to 10 years or more from the vintage at a reasonable price, concentrate on wines labeled reserva, although some crianzas will also fare well. Producers to look for: Beronia, Bodegas Palacio, El Coto, Finca Allende, Marqués de Cáceres, Muga, Sierra Cantabria.

**South Australian Reds.** Aside from most of the mass-produced stuff, almost any South Australian Cabernet, Shiraz or blend thereof should have enough stuffing to last 5–8 years from the vintage. The ones mentioned here might do more than last. Producers (wines) to look for: D'Arenberg (The Cadenzia, The Footbolt), Hazyblurb (Cabernet), Jim Barry (The Cover Drive), Longview (Devil's Elbow), Penfolds (Bin 28, Bin 389, Bin 407), Yalumba (Menzies The Cigar).

Because some common white wine styles don't age well (e.g., most New World Chardonnays, unoaked Sauvignon Blancs), whites are often overlooked as cellar candidates. Space precludes a comprehensive listing of white wine suggestions, but here are some general categories worth exploring: Hunter Valley Semillon, Australian Riesling, German Riesling, Muscadet, Loire Chenin Blanc and Chablis. For specific suggestions, check out the full text of this column online, at [winemag.com/stockthatcellar](http://winemag.com/stockthatcellar). 



FOR THE COMPLETE VERSION OF THIS COLUMN, INCLUDING DETAILED RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AGEWORTHY WHITE WINES, CLICK ON [winemag.com/stockthatcellar](http://winemag.com/stockthatcellar)



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FROM THE BEST LAND COMES THE BEST WINE





# STEMMARI: A New Name



**I**nspired by the Italian word *stemma*, or “coat of arms,” Sicily’s Arancio winery introduces **Stemmari**: the new name for its wine dedicated to the U.S. market. The word evokes strength, elegance and establishes a sense of nobility, tradition and territory. It’s a name that, on many levels, symbolizes the best of Mediterranean winemaking.

**Stemmari** is a studied expression of warm climate winemaking. The dynamic Sicilian estate, complete with two state-of-the-art wineries and 900 hectares (2,230 acres) of carefully manicured vineyards, represents one of the most important investments, both in terms of know-how and capital, ever made on the southern Italian island. The **Stemmari** wines of Arancio are a proud pillar of innovation and creativity that has helped support a greater Sicilian wine renaissance.

Arancio is owned by Gruppo Mezzacorona (*Wine Enthusiast’s* 2009 Best European Winery of the Year) located some 800 miles north in the Trentino region. In March 2001, Gruppo Mezzacorona purchased a first property in Sambuca di Sicilia in the province of Agrigento. It acquired a second, larger property in the province of Ragusa two years later. The first estate overlooks the beautiful Lake Arancio and

the hilltop town of Sambuca. It consists of a gravity-flow winery and a modern rendition of an authentic Sicilian *baglio*, or country manor, surrounded by palm trees, citrus groves and lavender fields.

Arancio’s expressions of Sicily come in three lines. The first is the **Stemmari** line, which is a collection of single-variety value wines. The second and newest line consists of blends that marry native and international varieties (see box). The Arancio portfolio



culminates with two super premium wines, the limited production Hedonis and the dessert wine Hekate.

“The idea behind **Stemmari** is to show the best of Sicilian flavors, aromas and personality with the benefit of the technology and innovation we have already been practicing for years at Mezzacorona,” says **Stemmari** Winemaker Matteo Covazzi: “We work with the best local materials including Sicily’s rich patrimony of native grapes.”

The **Stemmari** single-variety line includes a fresh and luminous Grillo (a white wine made from a native Sicilian grape historically used in the production of Marsala) that pairs perfectly with finger foods and fried appetizers. It also produces a fresh expression of Chardonnay that delivers extra structure and creaminess thanks to careful oak aging. It can be matched with vegetable risotto, light pasta or seafood salad.

In terms of reds, **Stemmari** boasts a beautiful Nero d’Avola (Sicily’s most celebrated indigenous grape) with distinctive tones of black cherry, almond and pistachio nut. It would pair well with tomato-based pasta dishes, or pizza, thanks to the wine’s ripe fruit and drying mineral tones. In addition, **Stemmari** offers a Merlot, a Syrah and a modern Cabernet Sauvignon.



# for Sicilian Tradition

## Also Introducing...

Arancio is proud to announce two new wines that are specifically designed to enjoy in a restaurant setting or with family and friends over a home cooked meal. The first is an exciting blend of Grillo and Viognier called Dalila. The wine shows the crisp, tonic and cleansing nature of Grillo backed by the subtle floral and honey fragrances of Viognier. Part of the wine is aged in oak to help develop its natural creaminess and structure. This wine could pair with pan-fried sea bass, steamed mussels or crab cakes.

The second wine, Cantadaro, is a blend of Nero d'Avola and Cabernet Sauvignon that is also aged in oak for added spice and vanilla tones. At the core of the wine, however, is a solid base of plump fruit and black cherry. This elegant bottle would look great on any table and would pair with a long list of foods from oven-roasted pasta or lasagna, to grilled or barbecued meats.

Both labels depict musical notes from a Sicilian folk song that tells the story of a beautiful damsel, Dalila, and the farmer (the Cantadaro) who is secretly in love with her. He composes a melody, a metaphorical valentine's calling card, in an attempt to win over her heart. The story of that passion inspired the winery to create blends that marry indigenous Sicilian grapes like Grillo and Nero d'Avola with international grapes such as Viognier and Cabernet Sauvignon.



The Merlot shows loads of red fruit and sweet tannins that would match roast chicken and potatoes marinated in garlic and chopped rosemary. The Syrah, on the other hand, shows elegant layers of spice, blueberry and crushed white pepper that could match spicy barbecued pork or grilled lamb. Lastly, the Cabernet Sauvignon is loaded with black fruit and smoky

spice that makes it an ideal partner to succulent cuts of red meat. All these wines regularly earn *Wine Enthusiast* "Best Buy" distinctions for their unbeatable value and competitive pricing.

Above and beyond the **Stemmari** line, Arancio has released two exciting top-tier blended wines. The limited production Hedonis is a 70-30 blend of Nero d'Avola and Syrah. This incarnation of

pleasure with rich density and a velvety texture can stand up to beef stews, lamb or game meats. The wine shows the spicy nature of Syrah set against the distinctive cherry tones offered by Nero d'Avola.

To complete the portfolio, Arancio also makes a precious dessert wine called Hekate (a complex blend of Moscato and other aromatic grapes) that shows all the fragrant intensity of a Sicilian *passito*. This irresistible and incredibly versatile wine will marry creamy desserts of crème brûlée or panna cotta. Or better yet, you can drink the wine alone or with aged cheeses.

"Sicily is an amazing territory with the potential to produce wines that appeal to all tastes and food pairing opportunities," says Matteo Covazzi.

**Stemmari** wines can be recognized by the familiar "sun" logo that also resembles a plump Sicilian orange sliced in half. The Arancio seal is a guarantee of quality and winemaking consistency with roots in storied tradition and territory. These expressions from Sicily have won over the palates and the imaginations of wine lovers around the world.

For more information, please go to  
**[www.feudoarancio.it](http://www.feudoarancio.it)**

## Sicilia a Tavola

Of Sicily's many impressive attributes, none is as irresistible as *la cucina siciliana*. Sicilian cooking relies on a rich patrimony of land and sea-based ingredients from piquant olive oil, to tasty grains for pasta and bread, to colorful vegetables that absorb all the flavor and fertility of the rich Sicilian soil. Cattle, goat and sheep's milk produce an amazing array of cheeses from fresh ricotta (that goes into *cannoli*) to aged pecorino and *caciocavallo ragusana*. Almonds, pistachio nuts, fennel seed, currants and aromatic herbs make for tasty, territory-driven condiments. Fresh catch of the day such as calamari, swordfish, sea bream and shellfish is always easily available. Delicate meat dishes are based on poultry, veal or pork. There's no better way to sample one of **Stemmari's** many red and white wines than with an authentic Sicilian dish.



Above: Seafood specialties as envisioned by the creative chefs at Del Pescatore restaurant in Mazara del Vallo, Sicily ([www.ristorantedelpescatore.com](http://www.ristorantedelpescatore.com)).





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# THE GLORY OF GRENACHE

Overshadowed  
by the likes of  
Cabernet  
Sauvignon,  
Pinot Noir  
and Merlot,  
Grenache is  
the world's  
workhorse  
warm-climate  
grape variety.

PHOTO JON VAN GORDER





# “G

“Garnacha is a fighter, a battler,” the highly regarded winemaker Alvaro Palacios once explained to me as we hiked like mules through his precipitous L’Ermita vineyard in Spain’s Priorat. “I love working with this grape because it has personality and character.”



▶ A battler with personality, but also generous, flavorful, fleshy, jammy, robust, versatile, willing to play with others: these are the characteristics that define Grenache—or whatever name you may want to call it. In Spain it is called Garnacha, in Sardinia it is Cannonau, and in certain corners of the wine world, Alicante.

Varietal Grenache wines are, generally speaking, robust and rich in color, with aromas of rubber, roasted black fruits, molten chocolate and pepper. Conversely, when Grenache is picked too young or made from oversized crops, or if winemakers excessively press the grapes or ferment at too high a temperature, the wines can be green, harsh and herbal. Due to the fact that growers must let their Grenache hang for a long time before picking, varietal wines

from places like Campo de Borja (Spain), Barossa (Australia) and the southern Rhône can achieve alcohol levels of 15% or more, while certain bottlings may even wander into the 16% zone.

For many decades running, Grenache has ranked as one of the most widely

A FIGHTER, IN PALACIOS’ TERMS. IN GENERAL TERMS, GRENACHE IS KNOWN TO BE ONE OF THE WINE WORLD’S HARDEST-WORKING, BIGGEST-YIELDING, LATEST-RIPENING GRAPES.

planted red wine grapes on earth, if not the most widely planted variety. With strong Mediterranean roots originating either in Spain or Sardinia, depending on whether you believe the 15th-century kings of Aragón were importers or exporters, Grenache has long been the leading grape in the southern Rhône, throughout much of the south of France, and in the Aragón section of central Spain. In addition, Catalan regions such as Priorat and Montsant, as well as traditional Spanish spots like

PHOTO LAUREN CAMEO/SHUTTERSTOCK; JON VAN GORDER



Navarra and Rioja Baja are home to large swaths of Garnacha, much of it rather old and grown without irrigation. The same goes for the island of Sardinia, Italy's prime source for varietal Cannonau.

Over the centuries Grenache has also proven itself to be a good traveler, evidenced by the fact that it has thrived in the warm-to-hot climate of South Australia since the first half of the 19th century, when cuttings from southern France were transported to now-established regions including McLaren Vale and the Clare and Barossa valleys.

Even California, and to a lesser extent the state of Washington, both of which sport dry, warm climates, have been home to Grenache for some time—more than 100 years in the Golden State; since the first half of the 20th century in Washington.

And recently there have been reports of new Grenache plantings sprouting up in far-off places such as Chile and Argentina, even Uruguay. Suffice it to say: if the sun shines bright in a particular place then Grenache will grow, and grow vigorously.

A fighter, in Palacios' terms. In general terms, Grenache is known to be one of the wine world's hardest-working, biggest-yielding, latest-ripening grapes. It is heralded for being resistant to the elements, especially heat and wind, and in the Northern Hemisphere it is almost never harvested prior to the month of October (April in places like Australia and South America).

As for the key to growing high-quality Grenache, it mostly comes down to yield size, which is why when we travel through the terraced plantings of Priorat, the high plains of Aragón, the stony soils of Châteauneuf-du-Pape and Gigondas, the sea-kissed lands of Sardinia, and the old vineyards of the Barossa and McLaren Vale, we see ancient bush vines that dole out miserly quantities of intense grapes.

Commercially, sommeliers and wine retailers are exhibiting a fondness for Grenache-based wines. "Personally I love Garnacha. It's one of my mainstream go-to wines," says Nick Nahigian, wine director for the Patina Restaurant Group's La Fonda del Sol in New York. "Outside of Priorat, I serve the Borsao Tres Picos (100% Garnacha) from Campo de



## SPAIN

### Recommended wines:

**92 Bodegas Ateca 2007 Atteca Armas Old Vines (Calatayud);**

**\$45.** Potent, deep and lush, with minty aromas along with wild berry and tobacco. Packed full of ripe berry and black plum flavors, while the finish is spirited, ripe, full and lusty. —M.S.

**90 Borsao 2008 Tres Picos (Campo de Borja); \$17.** The bouquet is all mocha and smoky/oaky richness,

while the palate deals blackberry and chewy, rooty medicinality. Oaky and spicy late, with licorice and warmth. Not heavy or overextracted despite being modern in style. —M.S.

**90 Cellers Sant Rafel 2007 Solpost Fresc (Montsant); \$19.** A blend of 80% Garnacha with Cabernet and Syrah. Purple in color with friendly black fruit aromas. Plum, fresh raisin and blackberry flavors are smooth and structured. —M.S.

Borja, a great value under \$40 with big fruit, bright acid and minimal oak."

While there is ample varietal Grenache/Garnacha/Cannonau to be found, Grenache also plays the role of a blending grape in various well-known regions. A textbook example is Châteauneuf-du-Pape, where Grenache makes up the lion's share of blends that also include Syrah, Cinsault and Mourvèdre, among other grapes.

So-called "GSM" blends, or Grenache-Syrah-Mourvèdre amalgams, are also commonly made in Australia and increasingly in California and Washington, where a loosely affiliated group of winemakers operating under the moniker Rhône Rangers have rallied behind Grenache and its blending capabilities. And in the Priorat, where poor schisty soils rule, Garnacha is usually mixed with equally old Carignan to form sturdy, minerally wines of stature.

Last but not least, anyone fond of Rhône and other Mediterranean rosé wines should raise a toast to Grenache. Tavel, for example, is a rosé based largely on Grenache; Navarran *rosados* (rosés) are frequently Garnacha-based, while most Provençal rosés contain at least some percentage of Grenache.

Following are wine ratings, recommendations and summaries of the status of Grenache in four areas of the world where the grape is a mainstay: Spain, France (specifically the southern Rhône), Australia and California. —MICHAEL SCHACHNER

## Spain

Garnacha is the most widely planted red grape in Spain, with more than 250,000 acres of vines spread across the country. The bulk of Spain's Garnacha is planted in the designated regions of Campo de Borja, Calatayud and Cariñena. Garnacha is also planted throughout Priorat, Montsant, Empordà, Navarra and Rioja.

In some cases, for example in Priorat and Rioja, Garnacha is used as a blending grape. The heady, potentially impressive wines of Priorat rely on old-vine Garnacha to soften and sweeten the tough, tannic Carignan that also comprises most Priorat blends. In Rioja, Garnacha is used to make Tempranillo more open and friendly. Garnacha is also fre-





## FRANCE

### Recommended wines:

**94 Domaine de Cristia 2007 Vieilles Vignes (Châteauneuf-du-Pape); \$90.** A rare example of 100% Grenache, the fruit is from 80-year-old vines, vinified in concrete and then aged in used barriques. The result allows the Grenache to come through as waves of superripe cherries, just barely framed by hints of brown sugar and coffee. But be warned: the high alcohol (17%) and slight residual sugar may prove too much for some classicist palates. Drink this luscious wine over the next several years. —J.C.

**91 Château Mont-Redon 2007 Châteauneuf-du-Pape; \$35.** A typical blend from Châteauneuf-du-Pape, Mont-Redon's 2007 includes 65% Grenache, supplemented by a half-dozen other varieties. Black cherry fruit is simultaneously ripe yet herbal, peppery yet touched with other spices and velvety in texture. Proprietor Jean Abeille suggests it will age for 20 years. **Editors' Choice.** —J.C.

**89 J. Vidal-Fleury 2007 Côtes-du-Rhône; \$13.** Now owned by Guigal, this bottling should be fairly easy to find in the United States, with 35,000 cases imported. Its dense, youthful purple color presages intense aromas of jammy black and red berry fruit, while gamy notes, black olives and dried herbs add complexity. The blend of 65% Grenache, 20% Syrah, 10% Mourvèdre and 5% Carignan is long and smooth on the finish, with supple tannins and just the right grip. **Best Buy.** —J.C.

quently used in rosado wines, where it yields a rosy-colored dry quaffer that some might call quintessential rosé. There is even Garnacha Blanca (white Garnacha) being harvested in some parts of Spain, but let's leave that for another day.

Last year I took my first trip to the hot, dry regions of Campo de Borja and Calatayud—this is rustic, dusty countryside, what one might call “true old Spain.” I saw old, unirrigated bush vines baking in the July heat, but was told by almost everyone that the plants love the sun—in fact, need the sun to ripen—and have roots that run meters down into the rocky soils to find water and nutrients. It wasn't the most beautiful wine country I've been to, but like in rugged Priorat, the wines speak for themselves with a deep, loud voice. —M.S.

## France

Grenache plays a prominent role in Languedoc-Roussillon, Provence and it is the workhorse of the southern Rhône and that region's most famous wine, Châteauneuf-du-Pape. But throughout France, Grenache rarely stands on its own because it has a tendency to oxidize easily, routinely attains very high alcohol levels and can sometimes lack structure. These common pitfalls are often countered by blending in Syrah and Mourvèdre, which add stability and balance.

Grenache is considered somewhat delicate and easily influenced by winemaking decisions, so very little of it is aged in small or new oak barrels. Stainless steel, concrete or large old *foudres* are the aging vessels of choice for Grenache, allowing the grape variety to speak most clearly: a range of cherry fruit is probably the most typical, from tart pie cherries through to Bing cherries and even yellow Rainier types. But there's more to great Grenache than fruit. It provides silky tannins and ample volume, making for a wonderfully seductive mouthfeel. And it often displays complex herb and spice notes characterized as *garrigue*, the wild thyme-lavender-bay mix that so frequently perfumes the air in the south of France.

Because of their supple tannins, the Grenache-based red wines of the south of



## AUSTRALIA

### Recommended wines:

**94 R Wines 2007 Chateau Pergola Blewitt Springs Grenache (McLaren Vale); \$67.** Remarkably well balanced for a wine at nearly 16% alcohol, this is also remarkably fragrant and complex, boasting an array of scents ranging from slightly mushroomy, savory notes through dried flowers and baking spices. The texture is wonderfully lush and supple, while the flavors add fruit sweetness to the savory components. Long on the finish. Drink now–2015. **Cellar Selection.** —J.C.

**93 Clarendon Hills 2007 Blewitt Springs Grenache (McLaren Vale); \$50.** Blewitt + Grenache + 2007 = something magical, to judge from the two offerings tasted for this report. Clarendon Hills's bottling is dense and powerful yet doesn't lose its way. Potent plum pudding and spice cake notes offer plenty of complexity and richness, without excessive weight. Long and slightly warming on the finish. Drink now–2017. **Editors' Choice.** —J.C.

**92 Grant Burge 2005 The Holy Trinity Grenache-Syrah-Mourvèdre (Barossa); \$46.** The blend is 40% Grenache, 35% Shiraz and 25% Mourvèdre, and the result is a compelling mix of dark, plummy fruit with brighter hints of raspberry, liniment and dried spices. It's full bodied and creamy in texture, finishing long and lush with hints of clove and coffee. While approachable now, this wine's track record for aging suggests it should evolve through at least 2017. **Cellar Selection.** —J.C.



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France are more versatile with food than firmly tannic Cabernets. Lightweight versions from the Côtes-du-Rhône make ideal partners with simple roast chicken or veal; more intense, sturdier wines can pair with game birds, lamb or beef. The biggest winter-weight bruisers from Châteauneuf-du-Pape do well with stews and braises.

Finally, some French Grenaches are even made to go with desserts or cheeses. The sweet, lightly fortified wines (*vin doux naturel*) of Banyuls and Rasteau bear some similarities to Port, but impress with their opulent fruit rather than powerful structure. —JOE CZERWINSKI

## Australia

Grenache provided much of the fleshiness for which Australian tawny “Ports,” as they were then called, were once so valued. Yet as the movement away from fortified wines gathered steam, in just a half-century Grenache went from being one of Australia’s mainstays to being a red-headed stepchild. Hundred-year-old vines were pulled up to make room for more fashionable varieties.

Thankfully, the pendulum is beginning to swing back again, as growers and winemakers committed to preserving Australia’s old-vine heritage have started giving this temperamental grape the respect it deserves. Australian winemakers often compare Grenache to Pinot Noir in its sensitivity to growing conditions and vinification techniques, both of which must be just right to coax the maximum potential out of its often thin skin.

Grenache needs warmth to ripen properly, hence the South Australian regions of Barossa Valley and McLaren Vale are the variety’s traditional strongholds, where it can be made in a range of styles from simple and sweetly fruity to brooding and densely tannic. The best examples find a middle ground that combines vivacious cherry and raspberry fruit with herb and spice complexity, framing the variety’s natural voluptuousness in silky tannins.

Because of Australian Grenache’s fruity softness and immediate approachability, it doesn’t require much thought in the way of food pairing. It can easily be sipped on its



## CALIFORNIA

### Recommended wines:

**95 Zaca Mesa 2007 Grenache (Santa Ynez Valley); \$32.** This spectacular 100% Grenache is a huge success. It’s so delicious, you can hardly stop drinking it. Just oozes in raspberry and red cherry purée, cocoa puff and caramelized, smoky oak richness, yet is thoroughly dry. An amazing, unforgettable wine that establishes a new benchmark for California Grenache from this winery that was an early pioneer in Rhône varieties. 377 cases, 14.5%. —S.H.

**94 Prospect 772 2007 The Brat (Sierra Foothills); \$36.** Softly tannic, sexy and delicious, with waves of berry-cherry pie filling and mocha for richness, and drier, tarter notes of currants, leather, rhubarb and pomegranates, accentuated with smoky wood. A blend of Grenache and Syrah, it’s sophisticated and nuanced. Try as an interesting, more food-friendly alternative to Cabernet Sauvignon. 106 cases, 14.8%. —S.H.

**92 Beckmen 2007 Purisima Mountain Vineyard Grenache (Santa Ynez Valley); \$48.** Deliciously drinkable, this is one of the best California Grenaches in recent memory. Complexity is not Grenache’s strong point, but lusciousness is, when the wine is well made. The cherry pie filling, raspberry tart and cinnamon spice flavors, enriched with smoky sandalwood, are wrapped into pure, fine tannins. Drink now. 900 cases, 15.5%. —S.H.

own, partner chicken or salmon and be matched with darker meats, although it can sometimes lack the acid and tannin to properly pair a fatty cut of beef.

To give their Grenaches more structure—and, one supposes, make them “more properly red wines”—many winemakers blend Grenache with Shiraz and Mourvèdre, just as in the southern Rhône. Some even carry fanciful names in tribute, such as Charles Melton’s Nine Popes or Grant Burge’s The Holy Trinity. —J.C.

## California

Grenache has yet to find its rightful place in California’s varietal hierarchy. Most of the state’s 7,000 planted acres are in the Central Valley, where the grapes make their way into blends. The few coastal plantings are in cool to moderately warm areas ranging from Santa Barbara up through the Central Coast, into Dry Creek Valley and north to inland Mendocino. The wines usually are medium-bodied, with cherry flavors often accented by oak, but too many bottlings are marred by high alcohol and deficient acidity. Uneven clusters can also be a problem, as they sometimes are with Zinfandel, giving both overripe, raisiny flavors side-by-side with green, unripe ones.

At their best, California Grenaches are deliciously drinkable, with bright fruit flavors and lush, sweet tannins, but they are not particularly complex or ageworthy. Among the best producers have been Alban (Edna Valley), Beckmen (Santa Ynez Valley), Quivira (Dry Creek Valley), Eaglepoint Ranch (Mendocino), Koehler (Santa Ynez Valley), Twisted Oak (Calaveras County) and Concannon, whose Reserve, from Monterey County, is made in a lighter style. Frick (Dry Creek), Stevenot (Calaveras) and Jaffurs (Santa Barbara) also weigh in.

Grenache succeeds more frequently when it is used as a blending grape. Saxum, L’Aventure, Pharoah Moans and Tablas Creek (all Paso Robles) provide the most dependably decadent GSM bottlings. Prospect 772, from the Sierra Foothills, also is a player. —STEVE HEIMOFF

PHOTO: JON VAN GORDER



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# *The Chef & Sommelier's*

Guide  
to

## Memorable Wine-Food Pairings



**Five world-renowned chef-sommelier teams  
reminisce about their food pairing triumphs and  
disasters and offer tips on ensuring success.**

BY JANET FORMAN



# W

hite with fish, red with meat,” these were the simple canons of Pairings 101: useful advice for straightforward cooking, perhaps, but less enlightening when dining on the complex cuisine of today’s inventive young chefs. For example: what wine pairs with a Trio (three distinct treatments of an ingredient in a single course)? Where do we go with a cheese course after sipping that big Napa Cab? What works with trendy vegetal ingredients like artichoke? Or with roast chicken printed on edible paper? For insight into this new age of food and wine pairing, we’ve gathered five groundbreaking chefs and their intrepid sommeliers for something akin to an Advanced Seminar. But don’t anticipate easy answers; don’t even expect our participants to agree. After all, this is graduate school.

**Wine Enthusiast:** How do you think food and wine pairing has changed in the last few years?

**Rajat Parr, Mina Group:** The rules of the past were very basic; too basic. There are more ingredients to play with today, more beverages to play with. We’re pairing with

beer, saké, cocktails, even nonalcoholic beverages. We’ve reached a whole different level because food has gotten more creative than it was even 20 years ago.

**WE:** In pairing with today’s complex dishes and presentations, how do you begin?

**André Compeyre, Adour:** We respect the food’s identity by pinpointing individual flavors. You have three elements in a dish: the product by itself, the garnish and the sauce or the spice, and it’s the mix of all three that matches with the wine. In any pairing there should never be a shock or a fight between the wine and the expression of the food.

**Didier Elena, Adour:** At the end, you should have one flavor in your mouth.

**Homaro Cantu, Moto:** Our sommelier does have a very challenging job: I mean how do you pair wine with a printed chicken? [*Cantu employs an inkjet printer that creates edible surfaces.* —eds]

**Matthew Gundlach, Moto:** In fact, when we print roast chicken on edible paper the texture changes but the flavors are the same, so it’s not as intimidating as many people

## CAST OF CHARACTERS

**Chef Missy Robbins, Sommelier Olivier Flosse.** A Voce Madison, A Voce Columbus, New York. [avocerestaurant.com](http://avocerestaurant.com)

As a novice, Missy Robbins talked her way into Charlie Trotter’s kitchen before taking off to apprentice in Italy. Marseilles-born Wine Director Olivier Flosse started his career like most Europeans, with twelve-hour days wiping down glasses and polishing buckets, on his road to a Diploma-Universitaire d’Aptitude à la Degustation à Bordeaux, the most prestigious wine diploma in Europe.

**Chef Homaro Cantu, Sommelier Matthew Gundlach.** Moto Restaurant, Chicago. [motorestaurant.com](http://motorestaurant.com)

Homaro Cantu, the molecular chef, having installed a chemistry lab in his restaurant’s basement, developed Moto’s unique edible menu to help reduce waste. The ardent environmentalist also stars in the TV show “Green Planet” and founded Cantu Designs to create futuristic food products, kitchenware and food delivery systems. Wine Director Matthew Gundlach matches Chef

Cantu both in stamina, creating wine progressions for Moto’s 10- and 20-course tasting menus, and creativity, in his cocktail menu.

**Chef Christopher Kostow, Sommelier Rom Toulon.** Meadowood Napa Valley, St. Helena, CA. [meadowood.com](http://meadowood.com)

The two-Michelin star experience at Meadowood Napa Valley is “farm to table but more technical and distilled,” maintains 33-year-old Chef Christopher Kostow, who came to the culinary arts armed with a degree in philosophy. Meadowood’s 31-year-old sommelier, Rom Toulon, a Loire Valley native, received his sommelier diploma at age 17. Among other distinctions, in 2004 he was named the Bay Area’s “least snooty sommelier” by the San Francisco Chronicle.

**Chef Michael Mina, Sommelier Rajat Parr, Mina Group.** 16 restaurants and one bar/lounge, across the U.S. [michaelmina.net](http://michaelmina.net)

Cairo-born Michael Mina’s restaurant empire includes two Michelin-starred restaurants: Michael Mina San Francisco and Michael Mina Bellagio, Las Vegas. The restaurateur

started as a 15-year-old garde manger at a simple French restaurant in Ellensburg, WA, where he was raised. Rajat Parr, wine director for the Mina Group restaurants, was born in Calcutta, India, trained as a chef at the C.I.A. Hyde Park, and credits an uncle in London with sparking his love for wine.

**Chef Alain Ducasse, Chef Didier Elena, Sommelier André Compeyre.** Adour Alain Ducasse at The St. Regis New York. [adour-stregis.com](http://adour-stregis.com)

Master Chef Alain Ducasse, whose 27 restaurants have earned a total of 19 Michelin stars, was raised on a farm in southwestern France. Chef Didier Elena, who comes to Adour after helming the Michelin two-star restaurant at Hotel Le Château des Crayères in Champagne, grew up surrounded by the sea. His father was a fisherman on the French Riviera; growing up around boats made him sensitive to the nuances of all kinds of fish. Toulouse-born Sommelier André Compeyre previously worked with Elena at Alain Ducasse at the Essex House.



PHOTOS COURTESY MINA GROUP





Chef Michael Mina adds the final touch to his dish. Opposite page sommelier Rajat Parr

WE HAVE AN OPULENT HALIBUT WITH PANCETTA, WHICH IS SUPPOSED TO PAIR WITH A RICH CHARDONNAY. BUT IF A GUEST ASKS US TO TAKE OUT THE BACON, THIS RICH DISH BECOMES VERY SIMPLE AND LIGHT, AND THE CHARDONNAY JUST OVERWHELMS IT.

—RAJAT PARR





think. But don't tell anybody; that's my secret.

**WE:** What are some new concepts in pairing?

**Alain Ducasse, Adour:** It's often said that pairing wine with vegetable-based dishes like artichokes, lentils and roquette salad is almost impossible. I disagree: some very exciting pairings can be found. For my signature vegetable "Cookpot," I strongly recommend an opulent New World red, as the natural sugars from the vegetables make it difficult to pair with a white. I would also suggest a red wine with a rich fish like red mullet; Châteauneuf-du-Pape works very nicely. Conversely, white wine instead of red matches very well with many cheese varieties. Try Vin Jaune with Comté or even Champagne with Camembert.

**Olivier Flosse, A Voce:** Red wine and cheese is not the best pairing. If you've been drinking red wine and try to have another red with cheese, your palate will become very tired. So to relax your palate and really enjoy the structure and finesse of the cheese, a dry white wine will work perfectly.

**Gundlach:** I like to say: "If you can drink Champagne with it, you can drink beer." Right now we're pairing a Rauchbier Schlenkerla with pork belly glazed in the smoky Vietnamese fish sauce nước mắm.

**WE:** How do you deal with trios, a course with three variations on an ingredient?

**Parr:** Michael does a trio of scallops—one with Meyer lemon and caviar, one with beets and one with corn and truffles—and with that we can only pair one wine. So because all three dishes have an acid component we picked an older Austrian Riesling. With age it has just a touch of sweetness and high acidity, which goes with everything from the high salt component of the caviar to the high sweet component of the beets.

**Rom Toulon, Meadowood:** Christopher does a suckling pig *four* ways: loin wrapped in bacon, chop marinated in char siu, boudin blanc of shoulder and pressed confit of leg, served with salted cherries, Mendocino seaweed, sorghum and fennel. So it's very challenging to find the right wine. We could have



Left, Chef Christopher Kostow of Meadowood; below, savory mix of summer squash, local anchovies and mozzarella.

I PAIRED COLD  
SMOKED TORO  
AND CAVIAR WITH  
A JUNMAI TARU  
SAKÉ AGED IN  
CEDAR BARRELS,  
AND WHEN I CAME  
TO THE TABLE WITH  
JAPANESE SAKÉ,  
THE GUESTS  
LOOKED AT ME  
LIKE, "WE'RE IN  
NAPA!"

—ROM TOULON



gone with anything from a light Gamay to a heavier Zin or Cab, but it's also about trying to find something that makes sense at that point in the meal, especially when it comes after a course paired with a much heavier

wine. We chose an Outpost Zinfandel 2007 for several reasons: we wanted to introduce our guests to a food-friendly Zin with a silky finish that's not too high in alcohol, and also 'location, location, location'. Zinfandel is such



a characteristic Napa Valley product.

**WE:** Are today's diners ordering by the bottle or by the glass?

**Toulon:** With a wine list of something like 1,100 references, we sell about 70% as pairings. Most people go with one of the longer menus like the Chef's Tasting and it's just impossible to pick one or two wines to go with the entire menu.

**Cantu:** I don't believe in bottle service. If we've put all this thought into food architecture, innovation and design, it warrants the attention to detail of pairing a glass with each course. We actually make more money with bottles but it's not about the money, it's about the experience.

**WE:** What was your most memorable pairing and why did it work so well?

**Compeyre:** My magic experience was the first bottle of vintage Burgundy I purchased at auction, a grand cru La Tâche 1947. After doing some research, the chef where I was working came up with squab, a very delicate meat, stuffed with foie gras, which added unctuousness, and Port sauce, which added a layer of complexity. The key was that the dish had the same level of complexity as the wine. That was 20 years ago and we're still salivating over it.

**Toulon and Michael Mina:** (A team that tends to finish one another's sentences.) At Michael Mina, we had a miso-glazed sea bass with shiitake mushroom consommé and shrimp dumplings, which has both Asian and earthy components. The best wine turned out to be a Muscat from Austria. It wasn't meant to be a perfect pairing but it went beyond everything else because the Muscat was bone dry and the dish was earthy and slightly sweet.

**Missy Robbins, A Voce:** At a Pio Cesare wine dinner we served the Funghi al Forno—very rich roasted trumpet mushrooms, hazelnuts, preserved black truffles and a fontina cheese 'fonduta' (similar to fondue)—about as close to a meat dish as you can get without having meat.

**Flosse:** We paired it with the Barbera d'Alba 2006 served a little bit chilled—not



Clockwise from top: A Voce's Funghi al Forno, Sommelier Oliver Flosse and Chef Missy Robbins

RED WINE AND CHEESE IS NOT THE BEST PAIRING. IF YOU'VE BEEN DRINKING RED WINE AND TRY TO HAVE ANOTHER RED WITH CHEESE, YOUR PALATE WILL BECOME VERY TIRED.

—OLIVIER FLOSSE



cold—because you have to look at the temperature of the wine as well as the structure. The wine was very smooth, like the fonduta, with the same touch of earthiness as the mushrooms. The balance of elegance and earthiness created an incredible symphony.

**WE:** Can you think of a dish that is flexible enough to pair with many red or many white wines?

**Gundlach:** We had a seared wagyu with sauerkraut and kielbasa sausage purée that paired with just about every red wine you could think of. With the intense meat flavors you could use a Cab or even a Syrah, and the acid in the sauerkraut also made it very



pleasant with higher acid reds like Pinot. For whites, our soft shell crab with coconut milk powder, buttered popcorn purée and passion fruit noodle paired with a Sauvignon Blanc, which brought out the tart passion fruit, and also worked with a restrained new world Chardonnay from Carneros, which had enough acid to deal with the crab but enough richness and oak to make it pretty tasty with the buttered popcorn and coconut milk powder.

**Christopher Kostow, Meadowood:** Our cod poached in nori with oyster juice, clam juice and foam seems to work with just about everything. You could focus on the cream element of the foam with a Chardonnay or



run with something a little dryer, which would bring out the minerality.

**WE:** What was your biggest disaster, something you thought would work and then didn't?

**Gundlach:** Trying to create some red wine-friendly courses we came up with a caramel apple stuffed with bacon, our thought being: "Hey, with bacon we can throw anything at it from a Syrah to a northern Rhône." But after we hollowed out the green apple and filled it with pork belly, then added caramel sauce and peanut, red wine was horrible. The dish defeated every one we tried because it accentuated the acid and the wines tasted sour. The answer was a Gewürztraminer, which had a rich body and off-dry character that brought out the richness and saltiness of the bacon as well as the sweetness of the caramel.

**Kostow:** We've never had tragedy in the dining room, although I present Rom with the opportunity for it pretty much every day since our food tends to be very difficult to pair. I do surf and turfs like lobster and sweetbread, or veal breast and hamachi collar, and my food also tends to be very vegetal, which presents inherent difficulties.

**Toulon:** I do remember one time, but it wasn't necessarily about the taste. I paired cold smoked toro and caviar with a junmai taru saké aged in cedar barrels, and when I came to the table with Japanese saké the guests looked at me like, "We're in Nepal!" So even if the taste made sense, it set up the wrong tone for the entire evening.

**Parr:** Sometimes it happens when a guest wants to change the dish. We have an opulent halibut with pancetta, which is supposed to pair with a rich Chardonnay. But if a guest asks us to take out the bacon, this rich dish becomes very simple and light and the Chardonnay just overwhelms it.

**Flosse:** Once I tried to pair the Chef's lamb with black olive and artichokes with a 2006 Barolo.

**Robbins:** Olivier really hates when I make dishes with artichokes because as you know it's very difficult to pair with wine. But I use artichoke in about ten percent of my dishes and I figure after twenty five years in the




business, he needs a little challenge.

**Flosse:** When we took the first sip we looked at each other and said: "Wow, that's really a disaster." No wine would match with the artichoke.

**Robbins:** So we decided to go with an artisanal beer, a Baladin from Italy, which is very

aromatic with full enough flavor to stand up to the artichoke.

**Flosse:** It was amazing that from a disaster we went to heaven. 



FOR RECIPES BY SOME OF THE CHEFS IN THIS ARTICLE, GO TO [winemag.com/chefrecipes](http://winemag.com/chefrecipes)

Left, Chef Didier Elena of Adour Alain Ducasse and, below, Sommelier André Compeyre.

YOU HAVE THREE  
ELEMENTS IN A  
DISH: THE  
PRODUCT BY ITSELF,  
THE GARNISH AND  
THE SAUCE OR THE  
SPICE, AND IT'S THE  
MIX OF ALL THREE  
THAT MATCHES  
WITH THE WINE.  
IN ANY PAIRING  
THERE SHOULD  
NEVER BE A SHOCK  
OR A FIGHT  
BETWEEN THE  
WINE AND  
THE EXPRESSION  
OF THE FOOD.

—ANDRÉ COMPEYRE

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# Ribera del Duero

## A Region *on* the Rise



*As the number of wineries grows exponentially in this rough and rugged portion of northcentral Spain, quality has never been better.*

BY MICHAEL SCHACHNER









“T

his region is a 10. If someone is making a wine here that rates a 5, that person is delinquent,” Xavier Ausàs, the dapper winemaker at Vega Sicilia and Alion told me in May as we toured Vega’s new \$25 million winery that is scheduled to be ready for this year’s harvest. “I’m Spanish and biased, but the Tempranillo from this area makes the best red wine in the world.”

## THE RULES OF RIBERA DEL DUERO

Many wineries prefer to bypass the D.O.’s *crianza*, *reserva* and *gran reserva* guidelines by simply bottling their wines as Ribera del Duero. But for those who do go by the hard-and-fast rules for aging, there is almost always a correlation between how a wine is labeled and what its characteristics are. Here’s a quick summary of the RDD rules for bottling:

- Must be at least 75% Tempranillo
- Garnacha can be no more than 5% of a blend
- Joven or robe wines can spend no more than 12 months in oak
- Crianza wines must spend at least one year in oak and must be released within two years of the vintage
- Reserva wines must spend three years in oak and bottle prior to release, with at least one year of that in oak
- Gran Reserva wines must spend five years in oak and bottle prior to release, with at least two years of that in oak



Above, Ribera, a rugged D.O. in the heart of Spain. Left, Xavier Ausàs of Vega Sicilia and Alion says Ribera del Duero is in the “era of the miniskirt” as far as its wines are concerned.

A comment like the one above about Ribera del Duero (RDD) from the man who makes the region’s most iconic and arguably best wines could be dismissed the same way a sports fan might toss aside a statement from Derek Jeter asserting that every Major League team should compete for the World Series every year. When you have the most resources—natural and monetary—and your owner demands only the best results, it’s easier to shoot for the stars.

But there is more truth than bluster in Ausàs’s proclamation: The Ribera del Duero *denominación de origen* (D.O.), which was made official only in 1982 (and with all of eight wineries), is producing the highest percentage of outstanding wines of any region in Spain, including that juggernaut to the northeast known as Rioja. For the ultimate item of proof, in this report we offer our

first-ever 100-point wine from Spain: the 2006 Pesus from Viña Sastre.

In visiting Ribera for the second time since 2007, and at a time of year when the weather was comfortable, the Tempranillo vines were beginning to pop, and the wildflowers were in bloom, I was blown away by how far this region has come since my first stopover here in 1995. In less than three decades, Ribera has gone from being a dusty, unsophisticated wine region with great but challenging terroir to a fully functioning global wine machine with more than 200 wineries, many of which are making and exporting world-class Tempranillo (also called Tinto Fino or Tinta del País). The wines are made from old, sturdy bush vines that suffer during the harsh winter and cool, wet spring before performing wonders during a short yet unpre-

DESIGNMAPS; PHOTOS PREVIOUS PAGE AND OPPOSITE JON VAN GORDER





## TOP WINES FROM RIBERA DEL DUERO

**100 Viña Sastre 2006 Pesus (Ribera del Duero); \$750.** If there's a perfect Spanish red, this is it. The aromas and mouth are pure heaven; overall it's faultless. Only 150 cases made; drink from 2013–2030. **Cellar Selection.**

**98 Viña Sastre 2005 Regina Vides (Ribera del Duero); \$195.** Concentrated and masculine. Giant black fruit flavors, texture, richness, coffee and cola make it special. Drinkable now; better in 3 to 5 years.

**97 Aalto 2006 PS (Ribera del Duero); \$115.** Rich, delicious and a real fruit bomb, with chocolate, vanilla, caramel, coffee and mocha. PS stands for "pagos seleccionados;" best from 2013 through 2017. **Cellar Selection.**

**96 Aalto 2006 Ribera del Duero; \$55.** Dusty black fruit aromas, spice, floral notes and a huge palate full of creamy mocha, vanilla and woodspice. Needs a few more years, but not 10 or 20. **Cellar Selection.**

**95 Vega Sicilia 2000 Unico (Ribera del Duero); \$450.** Like liquid silk; so smooth and supple. Aromas of mountain herbs vie with cherry cough drop and dried spices. Light on its feet, with elegance to burn. Drink now through

2025. **Editor's Choice.**

**95 Monteabellón 2006 Finca La Blanquera (Ribera del Duero); \$NA.** Pure, with richness, coffee and more. Juicy and intense, with flavors of boysenberry, blackberry, toast and chocolate. Drink 2012–2021. **Editor's Choice.**

**94 Viña Sastre 2006 Pago de Santa Cruz (Ribera del Duero); \$84.** Aged in new American oak, thus it delivers aromas of fennel, dill, vanilla and licorice/anisette. Loaded with fruit and spice; best from 2012 through 2020.

**94 Astrales 2007 Ribera del Duero; \$67.** Dark, smoky, floral berry and chocolate aromas are followed by acid-driven boysenberry, spice, bitter chocolate and peppery flavors. Drink from 2012–2018.

**94 Pago de los Capellanes 2006 Reserva (Ribera del Duero); \$54.** Opens with dry, smoky, classy aromas and then comes a fresh, finely etched palate with cola, cherry, raspberry and more. Drink from 2011 through 2018.

**93 Felix Callejo 2005 Selección de Viñedos de la Familia (Ribera del Duero); \$100.** A rich, deep style with earth, leather and new oak. Violet in color, with flavors of plum, berry,

tobacco and chocolate. Drink from 2011 through 2018.

**93 Alion 2006 Ribera del Duero; \$90.** Modern and pure. Opens with a blast of toast and then unfolds with fresh black fruit flavors. Smooth but lively; best from 2011–2017. **Editor's Choice.**

**93 Val Sotillo 2004 Reserva (Ribera del Duero); \$60.** Earthy aromas blend perfectly with bright fruit scents. Lively berry flavors and a dose of chocolate steal the show. Drink now through 2019.

**93 Vizcarra 2006 Inés (Ribera del Duero); \$125.** Muscular, with jammy aromas of mocha and baked berries. An oaky, modern style that works due to massive concentration and structure. Drink now through 2018.

**92 Pago de los Capellanes 2005 Parcela El Nogal (Ribera del Duero); \$80.** Super classy, with intensity to spare. The nose and palate are high-toned, hence red fruit aromas and flavors reign. Drink from 2012 through 2020.

**92 Vega Sicilia 2005 Valbuena (Ribera del Duero); \$190.** Aromas of lavender, thyme, sage and medicinal precede a silky palate with velvety tannins and femininity not normally found in the region. Drink now through 2016.

**92 Carmelo Rodero 2005 Reserva (Ribera del Duero); \$NA.** Forward, rich, friendly and delicious. Dark plum, chocolate and sweet aromas set up boysenberry, raspberry and cherry flavors along with fine tannins and balance. Drink now through 2018.

**92 Emilio Moro 2006 Malleolus (Ribera del Duero); \$50.** Warm and rich, with black cherry, raspberry, vanilla and cedary aromas. Well oaked, with mixed red fruits, plum and vanilla on the palate. Drink now through 2014.

**91 Montecastro 2006 Ribera del Duero; \$45.** Youth and minerality define the nose along with char and pepper. Deep and layered with pure black fruit flavors, chocolate and mellow tannins. Drink now through 2015.

**91 García Figuero 2005 Vendimia Seleccionada (Ribera del Duero); \$59.** Dense and heavy up front but on the palate it shines with intense black fruit, sugar beet and chocolate flavors. Drink now through 2012.

**90 O. Fournier 2006 Spiga (Ribera del Duero); \$31.** Aromas are led by mineral, leather and wood smoke. A powerful wine with flavors of black plum, chocolate and raisin. Drink now through 2013.

## RECENT VINTAGES IN RIBERA DEL DUERO

**2009:** Last year's harvest is being hailed as a great one. Comparisons to top years like 2005 and 2001 abound; expect balanced, powerful, full-fruited wines when the best bottlings start hitting the market in 2012. **Potential Rating: 95+**  
**2008:** Frost and hail made crops small and stunted, leading to aus-

tere wines, many of which are clipped, short and high in acid. Winemakers are unanimous in calling it a difficult year. **Rating: 83–84**

**2007:** A cool, rainy October curtailed ripeness and pushed back harvesting to the end of the month and into November. Wines are good

but not as lush and supple as they can be; still, top bottlings are showing surprisingly well. **Rating: 85–86**

**2006:** A warm, dry year with fleshy, flavorful wines with good structure but maybe not as much precision and aging potential as in the prior two vintages. The region's

best wines are excellent and generous. **Rating: 88–89**

**2005:** A fabulous vintage with big, broad, structured wines that offer lush fruit, balance and pretty much everything. The best vintage on the market right now; crianzas and some reservas are in great shape. **Rating: 94–95**

**2004:** After horrible weather adversely affected harvests in 2002–03, this vintage was welcomed as a fine one with tight, structured, ageable wines. Many reservas from 2004 are showing well. **Rating: 92–93**

**Other Top Modern Vintages:** 2001, 1995, 1994, 1991



## IF YOU GO

In the spring of 1995, my wife and I rented a car in Madrid with the intent of driving up to the walled city of Segovia and visiting some wineries in a then little-known region called Ribera del Duero. I was aware of the area's famous bodegas, like Vega Sicilia and the up-and-coming Pesquera, but knew little else about the 13-year-old D.O., its towns, its restaurants and its lodging.

Suffice it to say that Segovia was beautiful and memorable, but the Ribera del Duero region was downright disappointing as a tourist destination, especially the industrial city of Aranda de Duero. Even the castle-topped



town of Peñafiel, which sits on the banks of the Duero River and is the centerpiece of the region, wasn't any better, evidenced by the cloud of flies buzzing inside the town's only hostel/hotel. Quickly we bagged Ribera del Duero and headed to Salamanca some 90 minutes to the west.

Over the past three years I've been back to Ribera del Duero twice, and I can happily report that along with a boom in the number of wineries operating in the region, there are now a couple of nice hotels and a number of good restaurants serving either traditional fare, like roast baby lamb (*lechazo*), grilled sweetbreads (*mollejas*) and steak (*chuletón*), but also a handful of places doing modern interpretations of classic Spanish cuisine.

As for visiting wineries, Ribera del Duero is hardly Napa Valley, and for sure the tasting room concept has not taken hold. But by mak-

continues on next page ▼



dictable growing season.

As far as regions on the upswing go, few can compete with RDD, which sits about two hours north of Madrid and spreads out along the banks of the Duero River. Like many traditional areas in old Spain, Ribera's towns are sleepy and short on population; there aren't many tourist attractions, and the choices among restaurants and hotels are limited. But when it comes to the wines that are coming out of RDD, well, that's another story, and one we are excited to tell.

## Defining Ribera del Duero

If you accept the premise that terroir trumps all, Ribera has terroir in spades. Vineyards sit at elevations between 750 and 900 meters above sea level, on varied soils ranging from limestone to sandy clay to alluvial stones and gravel. As stated, the winters are cold and windy, while springtime and sometimes the key harvest month of October can be wet and prone to hail and/or frost. Only the months of June through September are relatively predictable, and in some years, like 2003, they can be blazingly hot.

Among 21st-century vintages, only 2001, 2004, 2005, 2006 and 2009 had few to no climatic problems. Conversely, 2002 was cold and rainy, as was 2007; 2008 saw both hail and frost, while 2003 was the hottest year ever recorded in Europe.

Nevertheless, RDD's old guard, which includes the likes of Vega Sicilia, Pago de los Capellanes, the former co-op called Protos, and Alejandro Fernández of Pesquera, among others, soldiers on making wines of power and elegance that ably reflect the character of their regions. Meanwhile, the veterans have been

Astrales' Eduardo García in the village of Anguix. Left, the Posada Fuente de la Aceña, a former power station turned hotel and restaurant in Quintanilla de Onésimo along the Duero River.

joined by a new wave of wineries such as Astrales, Aalto, Emilio Moro, Felix Callejo, O. Fournier, Montecastro and my personal favorite among newer operations, Viña Sastre (born in 1992, so not technically a newcomer), that are pushing the envelope of quality to previously unforeseen levels.

"This is a tough region, which is maybe why we came here in 2001 to do something different than what we were doing at San Román in Toro or what my dad [the legendary winemaker Mariano García] was doing at Aalto," said Eduardo García, a co-founder along with his brother Alberto of Astrales in the town of Anguix.

From a blocky no-frills winery, Astrales produces only an eponymous wine from multiple vineyards in Anguix as well as a single-vineyard wine called Christina. The current vintage of each—2006 for Christina and 2007 for Astrales—are typically excellent.

"We knew the triangle around the towns of Roa, Anguix and La Horra has great fruit because we used to buy it for my father's Mauro wines, which are technically *vino de la tierra* wines. Ribera del Duero has all sorts of little micro valleys and mesas; the vines are 30 to 100 years old; ours average about 65 years. It can be difficult in years like 2007 and 2008, but you don't have to do heavy extraction in the good years. The concentration and structure come naturally."

If you want to talk concentration and struc-

PHOTO TOP MICHAEL SCHACHNER



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ing appointments ahead of time, many wineries will welcome guests (just don't expect red-carpet treatment and soup-to-nuts tastings).

With that in mind, here's the scoop on a few recommended restaurants with good local wine lists as well as a couple of clean, modern hotels that did not exist back in 1995.

In Peñafiel, the best restaurant in town is Plata (22 Derecha al Coso; tel. 983-881-370), where chef/owner Julio Díez serves an array of grilled meats, hams and local vegetables. His chuletón is fabulous and his sweetbreads are delicious. Another option in Peñafiel for roasted or grilled meats like chuletillas (tiny lamb chops) is El Lagar de San Vicente (36 Barquilla; tel. 983-873-156).

In the town of Roa, you can eat outstanding lechazo at Asador Nazareno (1 Plaza de Puerta del Palacio; tel. 947-540-214), a multigeneration family-run restaurant that is frequented by Spanish and foreign dignitaries, soccer players and entertainers.

Also in Roa, at the Paramo de Guzmán winery, is the modern-leaning Raiz (disfrutaraiz.com), where chef Javier Ximeno specializes in creative cooking while his daughter Miriam runs the dining room with a constant smile. Raiz is also a good spot for sampling the local wines, as the carta del vino (wine list) is lengthy and diverse.

On the western edge of the region sits the town of Quintanilla de Onésimo, and right along the Duero River you'll find the Posada Fuente de la Aceña (fuenteacena.com), a former power station that has been transformed by owner Eugenio Gascón into a modern, almost trendily designed hotel and restaurant. The rooms are simple compared to the stylish lobby and lofted restaurant, but most have patios that back out onto the river. As for the restaurant, service is superb, the glassware for imbibing the local wines is of high quality, and the cooking of chef Pedro de Rodrigo can be inspired albeit inconsistent.

Lastly, the Hotel Convento Las Claras (hotelconventolasclaras.com) in Peñafiel is a full-service hotel with an acceptable, somewhat overpriced restaurant. It's a nice, relatively quiet place to stay and it's centrally located in the region. From Peñafiel, the wine towns of Roa, La Horra, Anguix, Pesquera de Duero and Sotillo, among others, are no more than 30 minutes away by car. —M.S.



ture, let's talk about the current lineup of wines being made by Jesús Maria Sastre, who survives his late brother Pedro in making some of the best wines this critic has ever had the privilege of tasting.

A bear of a man with a propensity for wearing plaid short-sleeve shirts, Sastre makes seven different wines in good years, but less in weak years, i.e. 2008, when he made only Sastre's basic roble wine (a young oak-aged wine) and some crianza.

Relying on vineyards that are up to 100 years old, Sastre incorporates quality-driven techniques like single-berry fermentation, no filtration, natural-temperature cold stabilization during winter and the mixing and matching of both new and used French and American oak barrels to craft amazing wines that hit the palate with a thunderbolt of power, flavor, depth, complexity and length. The fact that Sastre produced wines of 100, 98, 96 and 94 points for this report goes a long way toward justifying prices like \$750 for Pesus, \$195 for Regina Vides and \$119 for its Pago de Santa Cruz Gran Reserva from 1999.

"We don't set the prices for the United States. I can only assume our importer is driving a very nice car," joked Sastre when I met with him and his sister-in-law, Isabel, in May.

Back at the iconic Vega Sicilia, just to the west of Peñafiel, Ausàs and I are bounding through some of the 600 acres of old vines that he uses for making wines like Unico (95 points for the 2000 vintage), Valbuena (92 points for the 2005) and the more modern-styled Alion (93 points for the 2006). Each parcel has its own name, and in the new high-tech winery that was being built during the spring he will vinify parcels separately before doing any blending. Among these individual parcels, he calls La Carrasca one of his favorites due to the super high quality grapes it produces, while noting that El Correón is

Left, wineries open to visitors in Pesquera de Duero. Above, ripe Tempranillo at Felix Callejo's Finca Valdelroble awaits harvesting.

planted on white calcareous soils compared to other parcels that have red, iron-rich terrain and even chunks of crystallized limestone.

"In many ways, we are in the era of the miniskirt," said Ausàs, referring to the tidal wave of modern Ribera wines that consumers can now choose from. "But I can't dress Vega Sicilia in a miniskirt. Maybe I can shorten the pants slightly, but I have to maintain tradition," which is why Vega started Alion in 1991 with an eye toward making lustier, fuller, modern-styled reds.

Clean, modern reds are also the aim at Montecastro, a winery that started up in 2003 with the Spanish crooner Julio Iglesias as a partner. "We are paying a lot of attention to variety of grape sources and soils," explained French-born winemaker Beltrán Erhard. "We feel we can get maximum quality and expression by blending grapes that are old with younger fruit. Young grapes aren't bad." And neither is Montecastro's 2006 wine (91 points; \$45).

As for covering the gamut of wine styles, that really isn't Ribera del Duero's forte. While grapes like Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Malbec and Garnacha are approved for use by the D.O., it's the old vines Tinta del País that hauls the freight and delivers the checks that big-ticket wines like those from Sastre, Vega Sicilia, Emilio Moro and others earn.

Given the growing number of top-flight RDD wines that are on the market today, all signs indicate that those incoming checks won't be drying up any time soon. **W**

PHOTO LEFT MICK ROCK/CEPHAS; COURTESY BODEGAS FÉLIX CALLEJO



FOR MORE ON THE WINES OF RIBERA DEL DUERO, GO TO [buyingguide.winemag.com](http://buyingguide.winemag.com)



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# *Isn't It Aromatic?*

If you're looking for assertive, distinctive white wine alternatives at prices that encourage you to experiment, the aromatic whites of Washington and Oregon will tickle your nose, mouth and mind.



BY PAUL  
GREGUTT

Almost stealthily, a shift toward experimentation in aromatic white wine varieties has taken place among wineries from southern Oregon up to the most northern vineyards of Washington State. It started with the trend toward unoaked Chardonnays, with their generally fruit-driven aromas, and then expanded to encompass white wine grapes previously unknown in the Pacific Northwest—Riesling, Pinot Gris and Gewürtztraminer among them. All are proving that this region is capable of as much aromatic white wine diversity as California.

Though there's no hard and fast definition for what characterizes an 'aromatic white,' most winemakers are in agreement on their general character. They are fermented in stainless steel or concrete, so the aromas reflect the fruit and not a barrel. They are picked at brix levels that ensure naturally high acidity and low to moderate alcohol levels. In the glass and in the mouth they display fresh fruit, especially citrus,

PHOTO JON VAN GORDER





2008  
**EROICA**  
RIESLING  
Charles Heidsieck  
&  
Dr. Loosen

2008  
*King Estate*  
BONAIRE  
OREGON PINOT GRIS  
2008  
John Albin

CELLARS THE  
2008  
**HOGUE**  
GEWÜRZTRAMINER  
Columbia Valley  
2008

VILLA KENZIE  
2008  
**WILLAKENZIE ESTATE**  
Estate Grown  
Pinot Blanc  
WILLAMETTE VALLEY  
CERTIFIED SUSTAINABLE

2009  
**Abacela**  
Blanco Dulce  
Estate Grown

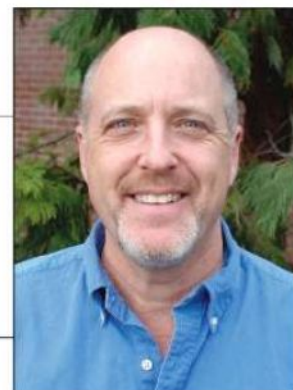


along with floral and mineral highlights. More often than not, the vines are planted on marginal soils, at higher elevations, in places that occupy the borders of viable wine-growing regions.

Among the leading aromatic whites globally, Gewürztraminer, Pinot Blanc, Pinot Gris, Riesling and Viognier have proven themselves to be well-suited to the unique terroirs of the Pacific Northwest. The northern Willamette Valley, Columbia Valley and Canadian Okanagan all

Ernst Loosen and Armin Diel. Pinot Blanc, though not widely grown, can produce quite elegant, mineral-driven wines in Oregon. And Viognier has become the white wine darling of young boutique vintners throughout both states.

Geologist Kevin Pogue, who teaches at Whitman College in Walla Walla, has done extensive studies on Columbia Valley vine-



**"THINK ABOUT WHERE THOSE GRAPES ACHIEVE THE GREATEST AROMATIC COMPLEXITY—ALSACE, THE RHEINGAU, THE NORTHERN RHÔNE," SAYS KEVIN POGUE.**

have conditions that favor the production of these wines.

Pinot Gris/Grigio has a long history in the Northwest, and is now the third most planted white wine grape in Washington. Riesling, of course, is the foundation grape for Washington, and enjoying a spectacular renaissance, with a generous boost from European collaborators such as

yard soils. As good as the region's aromatic white wines are, he sees room for further improvement.

"Think about where those grapes achieve the greatest aromatic complexity—Alsace, the Rheingau, the northern Rhône," Pogue notes.

## AROMATIC SNAPSHOTS

**Gewürztraminer** is perhaps the most effusively perfumed of all the best-known aromatics. Much like Riesling, it is produced in a vast range of styles, from bone-dry wines to ice wines. Most commonly, it is off-dry, with an oily or slightly soapy mouthfeel. Gewürztraminers are often quite floral, though from some vineyards, such as Celilo, in the Columbia Gorge AVA, they show more bracing minerality and a full palate of citrus fruits.

Whether dry or off-dry, Gewürztraminer is often paired with southeast Asian foods. It will also work well with oily or smoked fish and soft cheeses. Top producers include Amity, Brandborg, Phelps Creek, Francis Tannahill, David Hill, and Sineann (in Oregon); Pacific Rim, Upland Estates, and Hogue (in Washington).

**Pinot Blanc** has been dismissed as "poor man's Chardonnay" for much of its history in the Northwest, but in fact many Oregon wineries make wonderful versions, and for a few it is their best white wine. WillaKenzie

Estate is top of class, producing an elegant version with scents of lemongrass and grapefruit, and mixed fruit flavors of melon, gooseberry, lime and stone fruits. Drink these refined and subtle wines with mild cheeses, creamy sauces or fresh-caught trout.

Other fine Pinot Blancs come from Thistle, Chehalem, Adelsheim, J. Scott Cellars, the Eyrie Vineyards, Ponzi, Amity, Elk Cove and David Hill.

**Pinot Gris** was first planted in Oregon in the mid-1960s by the late David Lett (founder of the Eyrie Vineyards). He maintained it was the first time the grape had been grown anywhere in this country. It came into prominence much later, with the founding of King Estate, an Oregon winery (and nursery) dedicated specifically (and for a long time solely) to producing Pinot Gris. The Oregon style of this wine is rich and fleshy, with luscious flavors of fresh-cut pears and cinnamon spice. In Washington, Pinot Gris (sometimes labeled Pinot Grigio) has become the third most popular white wine grape,

and is done in a bright, tart, sometimes racy style with an emphasis on apple and Asian pear flavors.

Aromatic (as in unoaked) Pinot Gris will match up with similar fare as Chardonnay, but with a bit more flesh (Oregon) and snap (Washington). Top producers include ArborBrook, Eyrie, Chehalem, Adelsheim, Soléna, Vista Hills, David Hill, Ponzi, Boedecker Cellars, Lemelson, Sineann and King Estate (in Oregon); Alexandria Nicole, Hyatt Vineyards, Chatter Creek, Seven Hills, Mercer Estates, Waterbrook, and Lone Canary (in Washington). The best bets for value are Hyatt, Acrobat, A to Z Wineworks and Waterbrook.

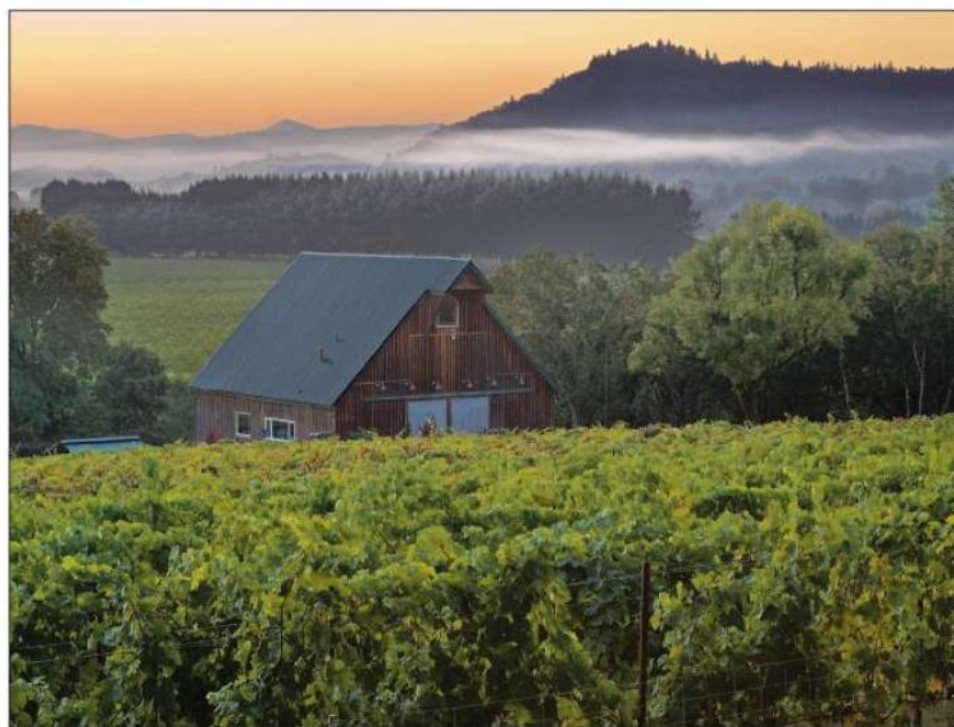
**Riesling.** Washington is home to the largest producer of Riesling in the world (Ste. Michelle Wine Estates). Pacific Rim, a relatively new project from California's Randall Grahm, specializes in Riesling, making up to 10 different versions in a single vintage. No white grape better captures the Washington style, a riveting mix of floral, citrus, apricot and peach scents and flavors, often threaded with honeysuckle or orange marmalade notes. Rieslings may be quite dry, off-dry,

sweet or ultra-sweet. A sweetness scale, developed by the International Riesling Foundation and shown on back labels, is being used by some producers to give consumers a better idea of the style in any particular bottle.

Depending upon its level of sweetness, Riesling can accompany almost any part of the meal, from appetizers through dessert. It is a surprisingly flexible wine, especially the driest styles, that can take on most main courses other than red meats. Top producers in Oregon include newcomer Trisaetum, Chehalem, David Hill, Argyle, Amity, Lemelson, Brandborg, Anam Cara and Daedalus Cellars.

In Washington the very best are the Poet's Leap (from LongShadows) and Eroica (from Ste. Michelle/Dr. Loosen) closely followed by the single-vineyard offerings from Pacific Rim, Dunham Cellars and Efesté. Also very good are the Rieslings from Whitman Cellars, Milbrandt, Gamache Vintners, Nefarious Cellars, Tempus Cellars, J. Bookwalter, Seven Hills, Trust, O-S, Zero One and Hogue. For great value look to the inexpensive Rieslings from Chateau Ste. Michelle, Pacific Rim, Snoqualmie, Arbor Crest, Kungfu Girl, Columbia Crest Two Vines and Grand Estates and





Idaho's Ste. Chapelle.

**Viognier** is the most recent addition to the aromatic pantheon, but has captured the imagination of winemakers, as it brings Rhône-ish intensity to white wine the way Syrahs do to reds. Along with its lesser-known blending companions Marsanne and Roussanne, Viognier is finding its proper style as site selection and vineyard management of the tricky grape improve.

The best Viogniers are poised on a razor's edge of ripeness, retaining their moderate acidity without bitterness, and reaching for peachy fruit without becoming flabby or hot. It's a fun grape to experiment with as far as food pairings are concerned, playing off whatever highlights (floral, citrus, stone fruits) a given example may reflect. Best consumed lightly chilled, to mute the heat. Top producers are Novelty Hill, àMaurice, K Vintners, Rulo, Stevens, Abeja, Alexandria Nicole, Abacela, Alma Terra, Illahe, McKinley Springs, Quady North, Bunnell Family, Caterina, McCrea, Seven Hills, Lullaby, J. Scott, Melrose Vineyards, Coeur d'Alene Cellars, Dusted Valley and Hogue.

"What are the qualities of those places? Stony soils; growing conditions not too hot; and a high enough latitude that in the ripening season the sun angle starts dropping off precipitously, allowing for nighttime cooling."

Certainly there are places in the Northwest that can provide those conditions, and as new AVAs such as Ribbon Ridge, the Columbia Gorge and Lake Chelan are certified and new vineyards are developed, still more unusual grapes, such as Albariño, Grüner Veltliner, and even Picpoul are being tried.

Seven Hills winery owner Casey McClellan has been growing grapes and making wines in the Walla Walla Valley for almost 30 years. He finds that "there are certain varietals that naturally push that intensity in the nose, particularly Viognier and Riesling. They reach out to people."

Calling his winery "a nose house, rather than a structure house," he explains that picking the right yeast, keeping the fermentation temperature relatively low, and avoiding oxidation are the keys to aromatic intensity.

Left, stirring the lees during fermentation in 6,000-gallon stainless steel tanks at King Estate Winery. Above, vineyards at Melrose in the Umpqua Valley, which has diverse climates, hospitable to both reds and whites.

Jake Kosseff, who is the wine director for Seattle's Wild Ginger and Triple Door restaurants, oversees a wine list that runs into thousands of bottles. With Wild Ginger's southeast Asian cuisine, says Kosseff, "the biggest challenges in pairing wine comes from the sweetness and heat (spiciness) of the food. The all-time best universal pairing for dishes that are sweet and spicy is Riesling that is a little bit sweet. The sweetness of the wine matches the sweetness of the food, so that the wine doesn't taste shrill, and the sweetness is also necessary to harness the spice in the food, because dry wines taste thin next to spicy foods, and often accentuate the spice to an uncomfortable degree. Good Riesling also has the added benefit of intense flavors that compliment, rather than get lost in, the intense flavors of our food."

If you are new to these grapes and styles, they may require a bit of a palate adjustment. Many veteran wine drinkers came of age during the heyday of heavily oaked Chardonnays and Sauvignon Blancs, and without all the oak the aromatics may at first seem too acidic or bright. But as anyone who has enjoyed the wines of Chablis or Sancerre can attest, it's not always expensive new barrels that do the best job of extracting aromatic nuances. Keeping brix levels moderate, growing in marginal soils, at higher altitudes, and aging in stainless steel can deliver subtleties that might otherwise be lost. Such wines are less prone to high alcohol, hence truly flexible with a wide variety of foods, especially Asian fusion. So go big! Experiment, have fun, and open up a new world of flavors, at prices well below those oaky Chardonnays. **W**

PHOTOS: JANIS MIGLAUS/CEPHAS



TO FIND REVIEWS OF THE WINES PRODUCED BY THE WINERIES IN THIS ARTICLE, GO TO [buyingguide.winemag.com](http://buyingguide.winemag.com)









# *Plymouth*

C

K

S

Gin

is a deceptively complex spirit, and one of the best ways to understand its mystery is to distill the English distillery tour to its essence.

BY  
STEPHEN  
BEAUMONT





Above, left and on next page: glimpses of the Plymouth distillery tour.

*contrôlée*. The combination makes it the perfect spot in which to learn everything there is to know about the spirit that has been called the world's

It has been said that if you wish to fully appreciate wine, you must first visit a winery. To comprehend beer, drop in at a brewery. And to understand gin?

You go to Plymouth.

That would be the Plymouth in southwest England, of course, from whence the pilgrims set off on their journey to the New World and, more importantly for our purposes, home to both Plymouth gin and Plymouth Gin, which is to say, the appellation and the brand.

Uniquely in the U.K., this unremarkable but curiously endearing port city—a three-hour train ride from London—lays claim to not just England's oldest continuously operating distillery, but also a protected Geographical Designation for the gin made there, similar to an *appellation*

original flavored vodka.

On this distillery tour, a conventional tourist activity—a casual explanation of the gin-making process illustrated by a thorough tour of the one-time monastery—is followed by hands-on (or bottoms up) business: we were invited to a blind tasting of five commercial gins—Plymouth; its Pernod Ricard stable-mate, Beefeater; Tanqueray, Bombay Sapphire and Hendrick's. The idea is to illustrate the differences in gin style, and in this task the sampling succeeds admirably.

## From style to flavor to cocktails

The type of gin with which people are most familiar is the London dry style. The term does not imply a requirement that the spirit be distilled

## IF YOU GO



Plymouth ([devon-online.com](http://devon-online.com)) is a 3–4 hour train ride from London. The “full monty” tour at Plymouth's 217-year-old **Black Friars Distillery**, ([plymouthgin.com](http://plymouthgin.com)) which includes the blind tasting, gin making and a coupon for a gin and tonic at the bar, costs £40 and takes roughly 2½ hours, whereas the 45 minute basic tour, which also includes the drink coupon, costs just £8.

Although much of Plymouth was destroyed during the last World War, the area known as the Barbican still stands as a living reminder of what the city once was. In addition to being the home of the **Plymouth Distillery**, the district also boasts numerous pubs, clubs, restaurants

and shops.

The **National Marine Aquarium** ([national-aquarium.co.uk](http://national-aquarium.co.uk)) is the largest in the United Kingdom and the deepest in Europe, and a great experience for kids and adults alike. (Avoid weekend and holiday visits if traveling without children, as those days are immensely popular with families.)

The large green space by the Sound is the **Plymouth Hoe**, an ideal spot for picnics, strolls or simple relaxation on a sunny day.

History buffs will want to take in the **Plymouth Mayflower Exhibition** ([visitdevon.co.uk](http://visitdevon.co.uk)), which traces centuries of the city's maritime existence through three floors of interactive exhibits, with special emphasis, of course, on the Mayflower sailing.

### Tamar Cruising

([tamarcruising.com](http://tamarcruising.com)) offers entertaining one hour harbor tours with commentary for £6 per adult, half price for children 5–15 and free for kids under 5.

When in doubt, eat and drink! Plymouth is home to a perhaps surprising number of excellent restaurants and pubs, including the seafood specialist, Piermasters, ([piermastersrestaurant.com](http://piermastersrestaurant.com)) the celebrity chef-driven Tanners, ([tannersrestaurant.com](http://tannersrestaurant.com)) the casual Barbican Kitchen ([barbickankitchen.com](http://barbickankitchen.com)) in the distillery building and the wonderful tucked-away pub, the Fisherman's Arms ([thefishermansarms.com](http://thefishermansarms.com)). For cocktails, especially gin cocktails, don't miss the Refectory Bar, ([refectory-news.co.uk](http://refectory-news.co.uk)) also in the distillery building.



It's unanimous...

New Amsterdam wins Double Gold



Awarded the Double Gold Medal  
at the 2010 San Francisco  
World Spirits Competition







become all too apparent as we attempt to create our very own gin.

in the British capital, but rather that it is flavored with fresh botanicals—juniper, naturally, plus a potpourri of any number of other ingredients from citrus peel to cardamom—which are added to the still all at once. This serves to differentiate London dry gins from others, which might be made up of three or four distillations using different botanicals at different temperatures, ultimately being blended together to form the finished bottling.

Great, but this tells you zero about how the gin *tastes*. Cue Plymouth Master Distiller Sean Harrison.

What Harrison wants us to discover in our blind tasting is how some gins, such as Bombay Sapphire and Hendrick's, tend more towards the gentle and aromatic side of the gin flavor spectrum, whereas others, notably Beefeater and Tanqueray, and to a lesser extent Plymouth, emphasize bolder, brasher and spicier notes. How you feel about either on its own is a matter of personal preference, but how you use them in any given cocktail can make or break the balance of the drink.

If you take the rose petal and cucumber-accented Hendrick's, for example, and put it in a Negroni cocktail with equal parts gin, Campari and sweet vermouth, the gin will all but disappear, leaving in its wake a bit of a bittersweet mess. Use Beefeater or Tanqueray, on the other hand, and the more assertive juniper and peppery spice notes will balance out the strong taste of the apéritifs and create a far more attractive whole.

Other varieties of gin emerging or re-emerging on the scene include the sweetened Old Tom style, which is a throwback to a 19th century style, and a cluster of modern gins like the Oregonian products Aviation and Rogue Spruce Gin, the French G'Vine Floraison and the English Williams Elegant Crisp Gin, which take the notion of dry gin in innovative and sometimes eccentric directions: Rogue even does a "Pink Spruce Gin" that is aged in Pinot Noir barrels, while the Chase Distillery in Herefordshire uses a veritable shopping basket of botanicals, including apple peel and hops, in their Williams Elegant Crisp Gin.

Another category, the cheaper and far less sophisticated compound gins, in which oils and essences are simply added to a neutral distillate to give it the desired flavor, is briefly discussed as we leave the tasting room and enter the lab. Here, the true craft of the Master Distiller will

## The distiller inside me

Against one wall in the lab are displayed all the ingredients used in the creation of Plymouth Gin: juniper berries, lemon and orange peel, angelica root, coriander, cardamom and orris root. (The last ingredient, likely unfamiliar to most, is the root of the iris and used in almost every gin, as well as a good number of perfumes, primarily to bind together the other flavors and aromas.) On a shelf against the other wall are a number of mini-stills. We are given an amount of grain neutral spirit—vodka, really—and challenged to add as little or as much of the ingredients as we wish to the liquid. We will then distill our gin.

How gins are flavored varies from brand to brand, but may be generally divided into three methods. Some, like Beefeater, steep their botanicals in the spirit prior to distillation, for a full 24 hours in Beefeater's case, while others such as Hendrick's position their ingredients in such a way that the vapors arising from the still pass over, around and through them. Still others, such as Plymouth, simply add the botanicals to the spirit and begin the distillation immediately. This is what we do with our gins.

At the end of the distilling process, we are handed a label to fill out and affix to our proprietary 200-milliliter bottle of gin. We are advised to give the flavors a full day to settle and integrate before we taste it. We are further advised that when it finally does come time to sip and savor our creations, we may well find that we have formulated the finest gin that has ever passed by our lips.

Although more likely it will taste as mine does: an unbalanced mix of over-assertive aromas and combative flavors.

What I've discovered, however, is how crafty a science is the creation of a fine gin, dependent as it is on a host of factors from temperature to ingredients, mechanics to measurements, the slightest differentiation in any one of which has the potential to alter the character of the spirit to an outrageously disproportionate degree.

Visit Plymouth and, likely as not, it will be a long time before you again order a martini, Negroni or simple gin and tonic without first specifying the brand of gin you'd like. **W**



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# Where The Wild Things Are

In South Africa's luxury safari lodges,  
wine and food rival the Big Five.

BY SUSAN KOSTRZEWA

**M**alaysian, Dutch, Indian, Xhosa, French...the cuisine of South Africa is as diverse as its inhabitants, and as difficult to stereotype. From the jaunty Cape Malay curries of Cape Town, brought in by immigrants from Java and neighboring Indonesian islands in the 17th and 18th centuries, to the refined and progressive French dishes crafted in the kitchens of Francophone Franschhoek, South African eating is a melting pot of the many people who live here, and each person has a legitimate claim to the country's culinary heritage. The food-friendly domestic wines—a perfect balance of Old World complexity and New World freshness—are surprisingly adept at bridging these many flavors in their pairings.

To the north in the sunbaked, safari lands of Sabi Sands, luxury lodges such as Singita Boulders, Lion Sands Ivory and Leopard Hills attract thousands of discerning wildlife and culinary devotees from around the world every year. Each features progressive chefs trained in both traditional and modern cuisine, as well as exemplary wine cellars—in the case of Singita Boulders over 12,000 bottlings—curated and overseen by accomplished chefs and/or wine directors who necessarily possess a love of adventure. In many cases, safari

lodges are the first and most impressionable entrée a tourist will ever have to the cuisine and wine of South Africa, and as such, the programs are a key focus for all three.

Wine and food dominate the experiences at the lodges—beyond the dining room, expect to nosh on an exquisite homemade pâté and sip a luscious glass of Ken Forrester Petit Chenin off the back of your Jeep while spying a dozen elephants within shouting range. Spicy artisanal *biltong* (cured meat) and curry puffs accompany a glass of Paarl Shiraz perfectly as spindly giraffes saunter by. It's the perfect integration of adventure and luxury—and for gourmets with a sense of experiential and palatal fun, Sabi Sands' private lodges cannot be beat.

At Singita Boulders Lodge (one of three Singita lodges in Sabi Sands Reserve), executive chef Loraine Pienaar's menu is dynamic and dictated by seasonal local bounty. "We're fortunate to be based in a province renowned for high-quality farming," she says. "We have regular access to fresh farm ingredients and our producers and family-based suppliers often introduce new ingredients to us and trial new products through our kitchens, which keeps us at the forefront of product-based trends in the country."

Pienaar's menu, influenced by "classical colonial countries and Malay and Indian cuisines," balances traditional South African favorites like *bobotie* (minced meat with egg) and *braai* (grilled meat) with fusion dishes such as wonton layered duck or quail and raspberry ballotine. Whether served on white linen overlooking





Pistachio-Stuffed Springbok  
Wrapped in Prosciutto.



WINE AND FOOD DOMI-  
NATE THE EXPERIENCES AT  
THE LODGES—BEYOND  
THE DINING ROOM,  
EXPECT TO NOSH ON AN  
EXQUISITE HOMEMADE  
PÂTÉ AND SIP A LUSCIOUS  
GLASS OF KEN FORRESTER  
PETIT CHENIN OFF THE  
BACK OF YOUR JEEP  
WHILE SPYING A DOZEN  
ELEPHANTS WITHIN  
SHOUTING RANGE.

the bush or from a casual buffet in the middle of a torchlit *boma* (open-air enclosure), dishes marry the exotic and elegant, the familiar and the foreign. “We meld high quality cooking with ‘true’ African flavors,” Pienaar says.

For wine lovers, Boulders is considered the premiere destination in the Sabi reserve, its subterranean, candlelit wine cave belying the wilderness above. Wine director François Rautenbach works closely with Pienaar on pairings, and also offers regular tastings to guests in the cellar as well as running a wine shop nearby with a collection of the country’s most coveted wines. While bottlings from Italy and France are still available, Rautenbach—a recognized expert on domestic wines—focuses primarily on top-quality South African producers and carries 222 South African listings.

“Our winemakers have exploded the safe option of ‘the usual suspects’ in varietal wines and continue to experiment,” Rautenbach says. “Our chefs have returned from travels abroad with great exposure to international cuisine, and the diversity of our wines makes them perfect for one another.”

Beyond Singita, other lodges are making a mark with their menus and cellars. “My menu is African-inspired, because it’s the cuisine I have been raised with,” says Shane Johnson, assistant general manager and chef at Leopard Hills lodge. “It’s so diverse, with such varied flavors, textures and sensations.” Domestic wines, local game and bush cuisine drive most of Johnson’s menus, though in true South African form his table is a melting pot: expect to indulge in a Pimm’s Cup and slather your bread with European butter when Johnson thinks the time is right.

“Guests who come to Africa for the first time are always impressed that we can offer such a variety of meals and wines during their stay,” Johnson explains. “Meeting people from around the world and exposing them to the quality of our wines and cuisine is one of the most rewarding aspects of being here.”

Refined, secluded and exclusive (honeymooner Ivanka Trump “shared” her private patio with a wandering leopard), Lion Sands Ivory lodge could take the fussy route with its menus, but executive chef

Janine Hobbs echoes the sentiment of her colleagues, focusing on “fresh ingredients that are locally grown, prepared in the simplest ways to preserve the quality and flavor of each ingredient.”

Here, dishes like ostrich bobotie, sweetcorn and pancetta crumpets and guava crumble are served in guests’ stylish private sitting rooms or at romantic, lantern-lit tables on the lodge’s patio. Like the other luxury Sabi lodges, gourmet picnics on the game drives are de rigueur, and guests are met post-safari with an amuse-bouche or sip of wine as soon as their boots hit the ground. The cellar, rustic and decidedly bush-like on the exterior but jam-packed with everything from Hamilton Russell Pinot Noir to De Toren Fusion V, is hand-selected and represents the finest producers in the country.

“South African wines and dishes are hearty, solid and comforting, but unique,” concludes Hobbs. “And for me, a creative person, what better way to express oneself than in introducing discerning people to these delicious wines and foods.”

For information, [singita.com](http://singita.com); [leopardhills.com](http://leopardhills.com), and [lionsands.com](http://lionsands.com).

### Smoked Ostrich Carpaccio with Strawberries and Gruyère Shavings

Adapted from Leopard Hills lodge chef Shane Johnson’s recipe, this easily assembled starter melds smoky, sweet and spicy flavors all in one vibrant and complex bite. If ostrich meat can’t be found, substitute with smoked duck breast.

*1 cup good-quality balsamic vinegar*  
*Fresh arugula (rocket), washed, dried and trimmed*  
*3½ ounces thinly sliced smoked ostrich (brentwoodtradinggroup.com) or smoked duck breast*  
*4 hulled, thinly sliced strawberries*  
*1 ounce shaved Gruyère cheese*  
*Extra-virgin olive oil, for drizzling*



Singita Boulders Executive Chef Loraine Pienaar and Wine Director Francois Rautenbach.

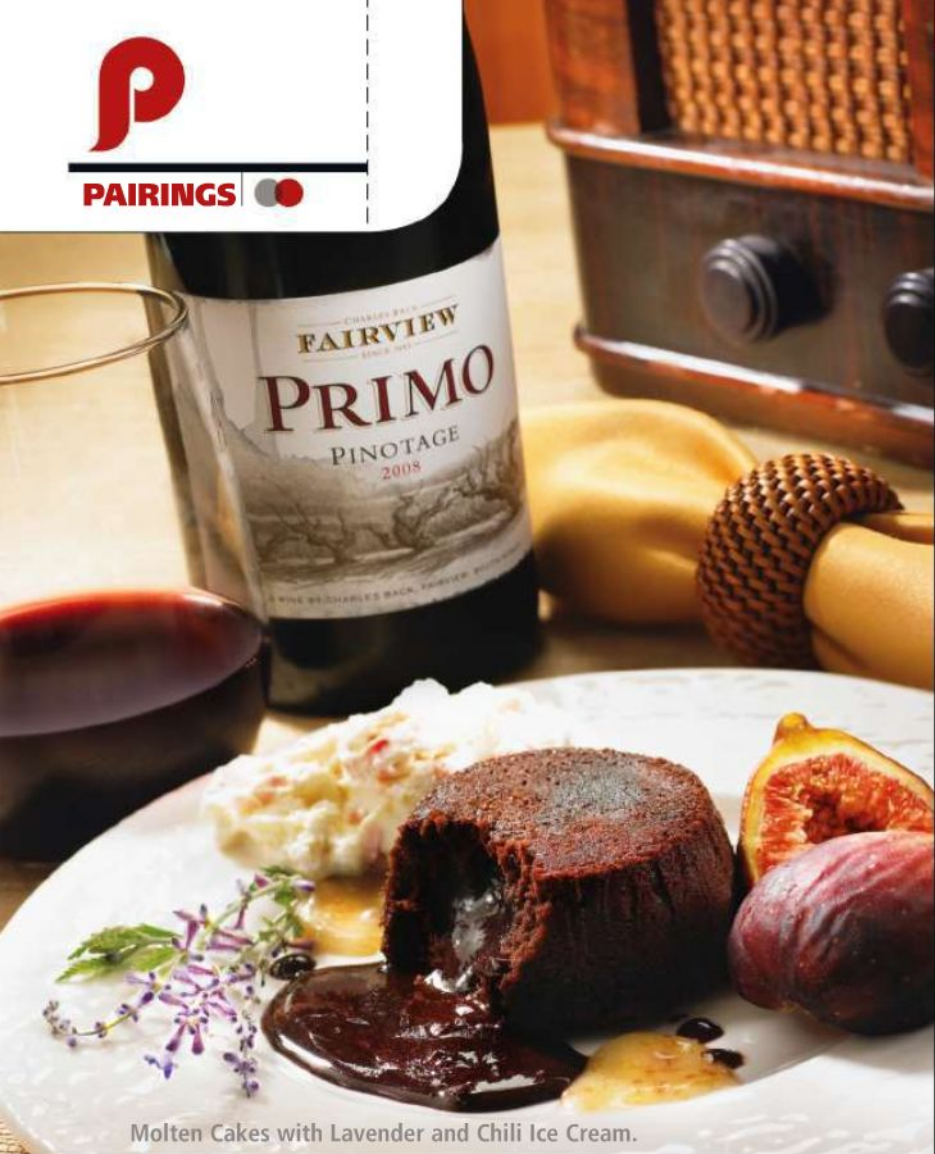
First make a balsamic reduction: heat the vinegar in a heavy-bottomed non-reactive skillet over medium heat until it reduces in





Smoked Ostrich Carpaccio with  
Strawberries and Gruyère Shavings.





Molten Cakes with Lavender and Chili Ice Cream.

volume by half to  $\frac{3}{4}$  and has thickened slightly. Let cool. When you are ready to serve, divide the arugula between four appetizer plates, placing a mound of the greens in the center of each. Arrange equal portions of the ostrich or duck slices on top, and garnish with strawberry slices and Gruyere shavings. Drizzle the balsamic reduction and olive oil over the top and serve.

**Wine recommendation:** Johnson recommends the Kanu 2008 Chenin Blanc, whose spicy and crisp character enhances the smoked ostrich and strawberries. Another option: the lively citric and floral Jardin 2009 Unoaked Chardonnay.

## Pistachio-Stuffed Springbok Wrapped in Prosciutto with Squash Dumplings and Chocolate Jus

This recipe, adapted from Singita Boulders executive chef Loraine Pienaar, marries local and international flavors and features springbok, a South African favorite that can be substituted with venison.

### For the pistachio stuffing:

Scant  $1\frac{3}{4}$  cups shelled pistachio nuts  
1 cup medium-bodied red wine  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  cup plus  $1\frac{1}{2}$  tablespoons Ruby Port  
1 cup granulated sugar  
1 cup red wine, medium bodied  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  cup plus  $1\frac{1}{2}$  tablespoons beef stock, preferably homemade

### For the springbok or venison loin

4 (7-ounce) tender filets springbok or venison  
4 slices prosciutto, preferably locally made and matured  
4 medium baby marrow squash or 2 zucchini  
Vegetable oil for frying

For the chocolate jus and squash dumplings recipes, go to [WineMag.com/southafricansafari](http://WineMag.com/southafricansafari)

**For the pistachio stuffing:** In a dry frying pan set over medium-high heat, roast the pistachio nuts for a minute or so until they begin to brown. Remove from the pan and chop roughly. In a saucepan set over medium-high heat, make a glaze with red wine, Port, sugar and stock, cooking just until the sugar has dissolved and the liquid has thickened and coats the back of a spoon. Set aside and keep warm. Mix the glaze with the nuts, tossing lightly so that all the nuts are coated, and set aside to cool.

**To prepare the marrow squash or zucchini:** Slice each marrow in half on a bias or if you are using zucchini, cut it into rounds or slice it lengthwise into long strips. Heat a lightly salted pan of water to a simmer, carefully add the zucchini and blanch for about 5 minutes or until al dente.

**To prepare the loin:** Place  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the cooled pistachio stuffing on one of the portions and roll the meat around it to make an oblong parcel. Wrap a slice of prosciutto around it. Repeat with the remaining portions.

To cook the rolled stuffed loin parcels, heat the oil in a large skillet set over medium-high heat until it ripples. Add the stuffed meat in a single layer and pan-fry for 2 to 3 minutes per side. Remove from the pan and let rest for 3 minutes.

Once it has rested, slice the springbok loin into two on the bias and place each portion on a dinner plate. Pour some chocolate jus around each. Place the sliced baby marrows upright in the jus and three dumplings on the side. Serve immediately. *Serves 4.*

**Wine recommendation:** The sumptuous Meerlust 2006 Rubicon Bordeaux blend, with its cedar smoke, graphite and black fruit flavors, is a delicious accompaniment to the gamy, spicy and bitter chocolate notes in this dish.

## Liquid-Centered Chocolate Puddings (Molten Cakes) with Homemade Lavender and Chili Ice Cream served with a Sweet Fig Salad

Spicy, floral and sweet, this imaginative dessert adapted from executive chef Janine Hobbs at Lion Sands Ivory Lodge, is worth the extra effort.

### For the chocolate puddings

2 sticks plus 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, plus extra for greasing moulds  
5 large egg yolks  
5 large whole eggs  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  cup superfine sugar or  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup granulated sugar ground in a food processor  
8 $\frac{1}{2}$  ounces semisweet or bittersweet chocolate, finely chopped

Pairings Continued on page 132





96  
points

2006  
CABERNET SAUVIGNON RESERVE  
NAPA VALLEY

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# New York

## UPSTATE, WHERE RIESLING RULES

**N**ew York's Finger Lakes have long been one of the world's most promising growing regions for Riesling. "Most promising," because frankly many of the wines haven't lived up to global expectations for what seems such an obvious Riesling terroir. A cool, water-moderated climate and hillside vineyards made Riesling seem a given. But for many years, the focus was on anything but Riesling—Chardonnay had a run, as did Cabernet Franc; Pinot Noir has some proponents. Finally, our latest tastings suggest that the region as a whole is beginning to fulfill its vinous destiny as a producer of standout Riesling.

The Finger Lakes have always had their share of good Riesling producers—Wiemer, Frank, Heron Hill, to name a few—but now there are dozens of names to know, not just a handful. The original pioneers have been joined by a host of newer ventures, and the oldtimers have raised their games. In this issue, Tasting Coordinator Anna Lee Iijima spotlights some of the noteworthy Rieslings from

her first round of tastings for *Wine Enthusiast*. Expect more of her reviews, covering other parts of the United States and venturing into some European outposts, in upcoming issues.

For red wine lovers, this month's Buying Guide also features some great Cabernet reviews coming out of California. The 2007 vintage yielded some stunners, including noteworthy efforts from such stalwarts as Mondavi and Chappellet, but also from newer wineries, like Ghost Block. California-based Contributing Editor Steve Heimoff was also impressed by the quartet of single-vineyard Syrahs from Novy Cellars.

Imports in this month's collection include some great Grüner Veltliners from Austria, a bevy of Brunellos di Montalcino from the great 2004 and 2005 vintages and additional selections from France, Spain and Australia. Finally, remember that you can access our collection of almost 90,000 wine reviews (plus Spirits and Beers) via our Web site: [buyingguide.winemag.com](http://buyingguide.winemag.com). Cheers!

—JOE CZERWINSKI

## RIESLING

**89 Belhurst 2009 Dry Riesling (Finger Lakes); \$19.** There's lots of zing in this lush, fresh wine with ripe pineapple, melon and peach aromas. Tart tangerine notes meld gorgeously with a bitter lime peel finish, giving added complexity to this intensely concentrated although not quite "dry" Riesling. —A.I.

**89 Chateau Lafayette Reneau 2008 Dry Riesling (Finger Lakes); \$15.** This beautiful Riesling from Chateau Lafayette Reneau opens with a delicate prickle of acidity that's wonderfully enticing on the tongue. Lush with aromas of ripe yellow peaches and nectarines, it's balanced artfully with a sharp, mineral edge and bright lemony acidity. Finishes quite dry. —A.I.

**89 Swedish Hill 2009 Dry Riesling (Finger Lakes); \$16.** Crisp and refreshing with notes of grated ginger, white flowers and cantaloupe. This dry Riesling balances peachy fruit flavors with a steely backbone

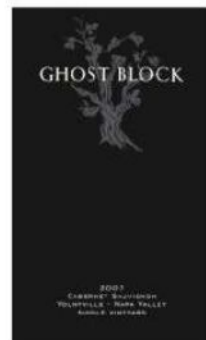
of slate and lime, tart acidity and a pleasantly long finish. Lovely all around. —A.I.

**88 Belhurst 2009 Semi-Dry Riesling (Finger Lakes); \$18.** This aromatic semisweet Riesling is a bouquet of jasmine blossoms and luscious pears laced with lime and musk. Sweet honeycrisp apples and powdered sugar on the palate meld with a tang of acidity and a long, mouthwatering finish. —A.I.

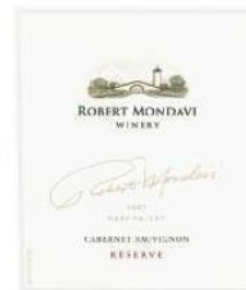
**88 Dr. Konstantin Frank 2008 Semi Dry Riesling (Finger Lakes); \$15.** There's a whiff of summer—ripe yellow peaches caramelizing on the grill—trapped between the many layers of this honeyed, off-dry Riesling. The palate is polished with an undertone of wet stones and notes of freesia and grapefruit zest. Brisk acidity and a long, mineral finish round out this cheerful yet focused wine. —A.I.

**88 Lamoreaux Landing 2009 Round Rock Vineyard Riesling (Finger Lakes); \$20.** There's a hint of smoke throughout the nose and palate that adds a layer of complexity to this sweet, pretty Riesling. Aromas of

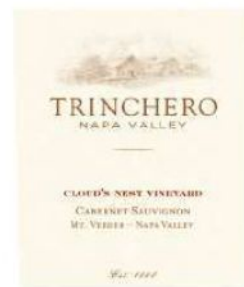
Continued on page 84



**95 Ghost Block 2007 Single Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Yountville); \$100.** A terrific Cabernet you want to cellar for a good 5–6 years, at the very least, and could go far longer. Shows what Yountville can do in a good year. The wine is very dry and more mineral than further north, yet is extraordinarily rich in blackberries, chocolate-covered cherries and cassis, with a perfumed scent of violets. The mouthfeel is all velvet and satin—so pretty and refined. **Cellar Selection.**



**95 Robert Mondavi 2007 Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); \$135.** Bone dry and utterly balanced, with deeply powerful, long-lasting flavors of blackberries and black currants and an intense, but integrated, coating of smoky oak. But it's also very tannic. Nothing soft about this wine. As fine a cellar candidate as any Mondavi Reserve in years. Should develop for 12, 15, even 20 years. **Cellar Selection.**



**95 Trinchero 2007 Cloud's Nest Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Mount Veeder); \$50.** A lovely Cabernet, brimming with complex blackberry, cherry, mineral, tobacco and cedar flavors that impress for their sheer power. Shows the firm, hard tannins this mountain always lends Cabs, but they're so finely ground, the wine is drinkable now with a good decanting. Should age well for a decade. **Editors' Choice.**



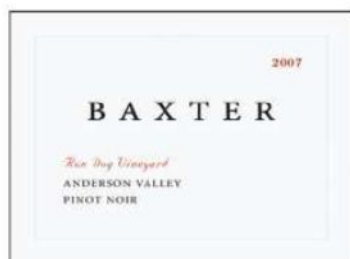


**95 Zaca Mesa 2007 Grenache (Santa Ynez Valley); \$32.** This spectacular 100% Grenache is a huge success. It's so delicious, you can hardly stop drinking it. Just oozes in raspberry and red cherry purée and caramelized, smoky oak richness, yet is thoroughly dry. An amazing, unforgettable wine that establishes a new benchmark for California Grenache from this winery that was an early pioneer in Rhône varieties. **Editors' Choice.**



**94 Astrales 2007 Tempranillo (Ribera del Duero); \$67.** Shows almost all that's great about the region: dark, smoky, floral berry and chocolate aromas followed by juicy, acid-driven boysenberry, spice, bitter chocolate and

peppery flavors. An excellent effort for a tough vintage, with dynamite power and a poise. Drink 2012–2018. Imported by Grapes of Spain.



**94 Baxter 2007 Run Dog Vineyard Pinot Noir (Anderson Valley); \$45.** An exotic Pinot of a type usually limited to Anderson Valley. It's marked as much by gamy, mushroom and forest floor notes as by raspberries, cherries and red currants, with notes of licorice and pepper. Drily crisp and elegantly constructed, this complex young wine should develop for 4–6 years.



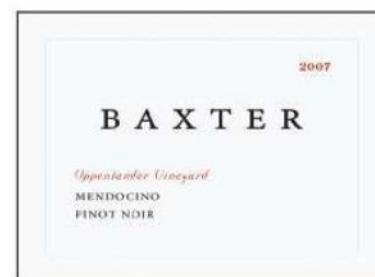
**94 Chappellet 2007 Signature Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); \$42.** This is the winery's basic Cabernet, but there's nothing common about it. It's dry and complex and moderately ageworthy, a hillside Cabernet that revels in its plush, firm tannins and ripe fruit. There's a minerality that seems to come from the soil, with expressive blackberry, currant, chocolate and anise flavors. Really fine now after a decant, and should develop through this decade.



**94 Pago de los Capellanes 2006 Reserva (Ribera del Duero); \$54.** Sensational RDD Reserva with dry, smoky, elegant aromas and then a super-juicy, fresh, finely etched palate with composed cola, cherry, raspberry and more. This wine exhibits merit after merit; it's complex yet easy to like. Really excellent for the money. Drink 2011–2018. Imported by Antalva Imports.



**94 Stonestreet 2008 Lower Rim Chardonnay (Alexander Valley); \$55.** Ultrarich, an oily, unctuous wine offering tiers of pineapples, pears, limes and mangoes, enriched with sweet, smoky oak. Made in the superripe California style, yet always retains a crisp, dry elegance.

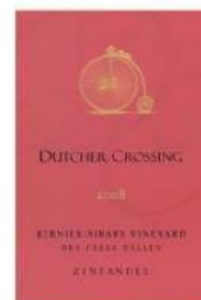


**93 Baxter 2007 Oppenlander Vineyard Pinot Noir (Mendocino); \$60.** A fresh, vibrant but tight young Pinot Noir. It's rich in wild raspberry, cherry and cola flavors, enhanced with spicy oak, and firm in acidity and tannins. Should be cellared for a good 3–5 years. **Cellar Selection.**



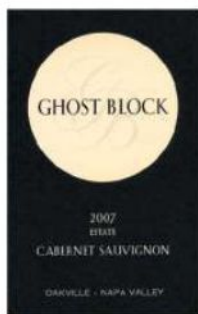
**93 Castello Banfi 2005 Poggio alle Mura (Brunello di Montalcino); \$85.** Castello Banfi's cru expression of Brunello, Poggio alle Mura, is a dark and delicious Brunello with a vertical aromatic delivery

of blackberry, currants, plums, cola, mesquite and spice. Sweet oak flavors of vanilla spread over the palate and the wine has impressive consistency and persistency. Imported by Banfi Vintners.



**93 Dutcher Crossing 2008 Bernier-Sibary Vineyard Zinfandel (Dry Creek Valley); \$39.** Quite a beautiful Zinfandel. It takes Dry Creek's briary fruit and lifts it, although the wine retains a peppery, brambly character. Blended with Petite Sirah, Carignane and Mataro (Mourvèdre), it's rich in wild raspberry, cherry, sweet cured tobacco, anise and sandalwood flavors, with a squeeze of orange essence.





**93 Ghost Block 2007 Estate Cabernet Sauvignon (Oakville); \$60.** A beautiful Cabernet. Dark, dry and elegantly structured, it has classic Napa tannins and is nicely trimmed in acidity. The flavors are complex and delicious, suggesting ripe blackberries, black currants and cedar. Drink now–2015.



**93 Lancaster 2009 Samantha's Estate Sauvignon Blanc (Alexander Valley); \$24.**

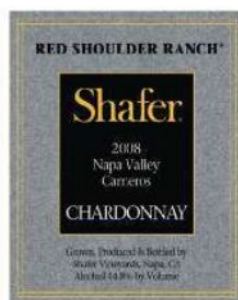
A worthy white wine to stand beside the winery's estate red. Made from a single vineyard, it's absolutely dry and brilliantly crisp in acidity, with subtle, complex flavors of white peach, citrus fruits, minerals and white flowers. A touch of oak adds the perfect note of toast. Very fancy and upscale. **Editors' Choice.**



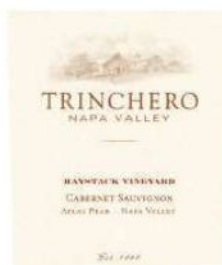
**93 Magistrate 2007 Limited Production Zinfandel (Dry Creek Valley); \$25.** Great Zinfandel, showing Dry Creek Valley at its best. The wine is dry and super-spicy, with complex, succulent wild berry, currant, licorice, bacon and pepper flavors, and just a touch of superripe raisins on the finish. Really notable for the quality of its fine tannins. **Editors' Choice.**



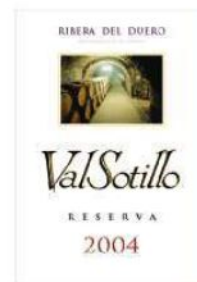
**93 Oakville Winery 2007 Estate Grown & Produced Cabernet Sauvignon (Oakville); \$46.** Very ripe and extracted, almost jammy, with primary fruit flavors of blackberries, black cherries, red plums, currants, dark chocolate and spices. Delicious and noble, but kind of immature. Give it 4–6 years to soften and integrate, and it could develop even longer. **Cellar Selection.**



**93 Shafer 2008 Red Shoulder Ranch Chardonnay (Carneros); \$48.** After many years of cult stardom, Shafer's Red Shoulder Ranch still rules. It performs the difficult feat of combining powerful richness with dry elegance. The pineapple, Meyer lemon and kaffir lime flavors are undergirded with a steely minerality, while oak and lees add rich tiers of interest. The 2008 is tarter than usual, making it a good foil against lobster risotto or grilled salmon with a tropical fruit salsa topping.



**93 Trincherro 2007 Haystack Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Atlas Peak); \$50.** A wonderful Cabernet, rich and dry. The alcohol is fairly high, but in keeping with the wine's power. The fruity blackberry and currant flavors are balanced by refreshingly earthy notes of olives and sweet herbs. Should develop through 2013.



**93 Val Sotillo 2004 Reserva (Ribera del Duero); \$60.** Wonderful on the bouquet, where earthy notes blend perfectly with alert, bright fruit aromas. This is a sizable, full-bodied wine with leather, lively fruit character and a dose of rich chocolate. It's in excellent shape and shows impressive balance and depth. Delicious to the core, with heft and noticeable oak that should lessen if given more time. Drink now–2019. Imported by Tradewinds Specialty Imports.

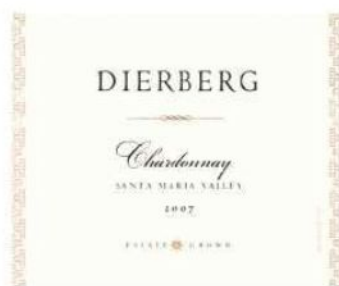


**92 Argiano 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$51.** From one of the most beautiful and historic estates in Montalcino, Argiano's Brunello is redolent of cherry, cassia, exotic spice, smoke and very tame, delicate oak notes of toasted vanilla. The wine is bright and polished with firm tannins and some sour cherry nuances on the close. Imported by Vias Imports.

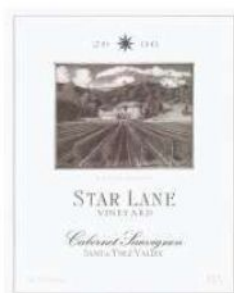


**92 C. Beck 2007 Petite Sirah (Napa Valley); \$38.** A very good, even noble Petite Sirah whose classic structure expresses the variety's personality in an elegant way. Tannic and dry, it's a big, fruity wine, with notes of blackberries, coffee, dark chocolate and tar. Now–2013.





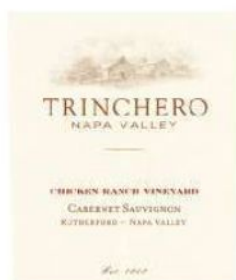
**92 Dierberg 2007 Chardonnay (Santa Maria Valley); \$32.** A lovely Chardonnay, bone dry and rich, that shows how well this cool Santa Barbara valley can develop the variety. With crisp acidity and a tang of minerals, the wine is citrusy and floral, with opulent notes from oak barrels and creamy lees.



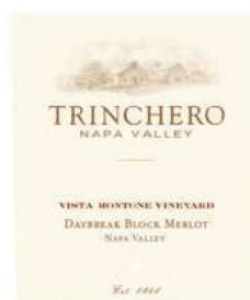
**92 Star Lane Vineyard 2006 Cabernet Sauvignon (Santa Ynez Valley); \$42.** Quite a sophisticated Cab, and one that shows the promise of Happy Canyon, which became an appellation this year. The wine is much drier and leaner than anything in Napa, but quite elegant and intense in blackberries, black currants and dried herbs. It's a worthy successor to the very fine 2005. The alcohol is 15.1%.



**92 The Old Faithful 2005 Northern Exposure Grenache (McLaren Vale); \$38.** Starts off with intriguing aromas of coffee, clove and plum that segue into dark, warming flavors. It's full bodied, lush and almost creamy in texture, with supple tannins that only hint at their presence before fading into a long, licorice-tinged finish. Best now–2013. Imported by USA Wine West. **Editors' Choice.**



**92 Trinchero 2007 Chicken Ranch Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Rutherford); \$35.** A seriously good wine. Shows classic elegance in the dryness, fine tannins and restrained flavors of blackberries, black currants and cedar. Feels really refined in the mouth, with an herbaceousness that both grounds it and balances the fruit. Now–2013.



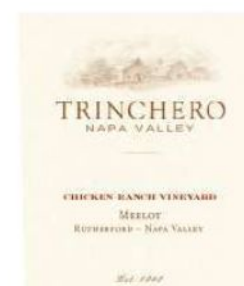
**92 Trinchero 2007 Vista Montone Vineyard Daybreak Block Merlot (Napa Valley); \$35.** A lovely Merlot, dry and oaky and earthy, with a rich vein of cherries, violets, red licorice and spicy bacon. Defines elegance, with a gentle scour of tannins. One of the drier, classier Merlots out there. Great with a juicy steak.



**91 Fuligni 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$75.** Here's an austere and sophisticated Brunello with a slightly brownish hue to its garnet color and aged aromas of dried currants and forest berries, spice, mesquite, soy sauce and licorice. The wine is exceedingly silky and drying in the mouth. Imported by Empson (USA) Ltd.



**91 Side Job 2008 C5 Stefani Vineyard Zinfandel (Dry Creek Valley); \$25.** This very dry wine shows the spicy, briary flavors of Dry Creek Valley Zinfandel. The flavors are of wild black and red berries, currants, brambly nettles, pepper, Chinese 5 spice, espresso and a hint of earthy dark chocolate. Quite a fine, complex drink that wants smoky, charred meats, like barbecued ribs, pork, or a rich grilled steak.

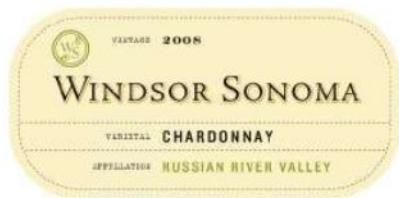


**91 Trinchero 2007 Chicken Ranch Vineyard Merlot (Rutherford); \$35.** Dry and tannic, a Merlot that's the opposite of softly luxurious. But it's extremely elegant with its cherry, red currant and bitter cherrieskin flavors, and shows true complexity throughout. Just cries out for a fine steak, in a brown butter, soft cheese and garlic sauce.



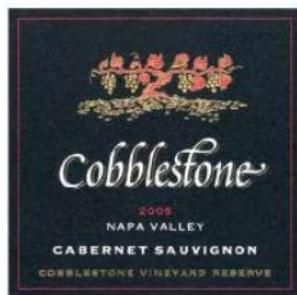
**91 Trinchero 2007 Meritage (Napa Valley); \$50.** Tough and gritty in tannins, with a mouthfeel like you're chewing on sandpaper. Yet this Bordeaux blend is very rich in fruit, with a solid core of blackberries, black currants, anise and violets, sweetened with toast oak. Decant this classy Bordeaux Blend for a few hours before serving.



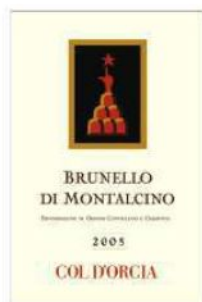


## 91 Windsor Sonoma 2008 Chardonnay (Russian River Valley); \$20.

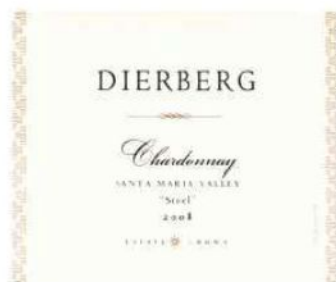
This is a firm, dry, minerally Chardonnay. It's not blockbuster rich, but it is clean and vibrant and elegant. The flinty flavors are enriched with notes of pineapples and green apples, while oak and lees give hints of buttered toast and sour cream. A very fine, food-friendly wine that sommeliers should be aware of. **Editors' Choice.**



**90 Cobblestone 2005 Cobblestone Vineyard Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); \$69.** Clearly well-originated, to judge from the fine structure and essential purity. But it's a very tannic, closed wine, with a mouth-numbing astringency that accentuates the acidity. Even so, it's so ripe in blackberries and currants it's almost drinkable now, with a good decant. But you're best off cellaring a good 4–6 years. **Cellar Selection.**

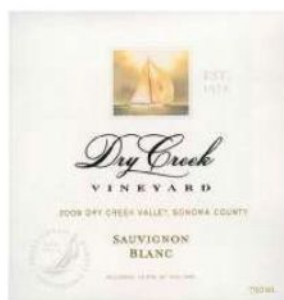


**90 Col d'Orcia 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$55.** An improvement over past vintages, thanks to the elegance of its fruit and the richness of its consistency. The wine is bursting with cherry and casis flavors and it shows harmony and a firm, streamlined nature to its mouthfeel. Imported by Palm Bay International.



## 90 Dierberg 2008 Steel Chardonnay (Santa Maria Valley); \$32.

Made without any oak influences, this wine shows the splendors of great Santa Maria Chardonnay. It's marked by complex flavors of Meyer lemons, pineapples, orange zest and honeysuckle, and is beautifully bright in crisp acidity. Nice with fresh crab.



## 90 Dry Creek Vineyard 2009 Sauvignon Blanc (Dry Creek Valley); \$16.

Dry, dry, dry is the name of the game with this Sauvignon Blanc. It's rich in Meyer lemon, kaffir lime and pineapple flavors, with intense, zesty acidity for clean balance, and the finish is spicy and stimulating. A beautiful cocktail wine to get a fancy dinner started. **Editors' Choice.**



## 90 MacRostie 2008 Chardonnay (Sonoma Coast); \$25.

A very good, useful Chardonnay that's easy to drink, yet also quite complex. Brisk and crisp in acidity, it shows citrus mineral, green apple and floral notes, touched with smoky oak.



## 90 Mauritson 2009 Sauvignon Blanc (Dry Creek Valley); \$17.

Mauritson has been building up a pretty good track record with their unoaked Sauvignon Blanc. This '09 shows the balance of the vintage, with excellent acidity, modest alcohol and complex varietal flavors that range from citrus fruits and apples to spices and gooseberries. It's unusually good for the price. **Editors' Choice.**



## 90 Miraflores 2007 Méthode Ancienne Syrah (El Dorado); \$25.

This is a wonderfully soft, complex Syrah. Completely dry, it offers waves of raspberries, red currants, mocha, licorice,

sandalwood and dusty Indian spices that linger on through a long finish. A very fine, medium- to full-bodied red wine for drinking now.

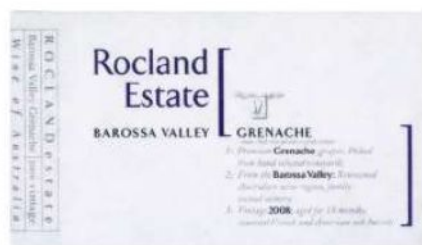


## 90 Perry Creek 2007 Altitude 2401 Dark Forest Syrah (El Dorado); \$28.

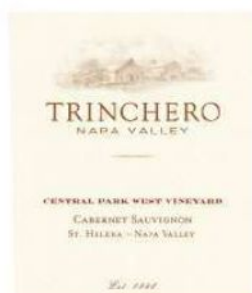
A distinctive Syrah that shows great concentration in the focused blackberry, sweet leather, dark chocolate, mineral and black pepper flavors. Beyond the power, the wine is bone dry, soft in acidity and quite tannic. The end result is impressive, and ready to drink now.

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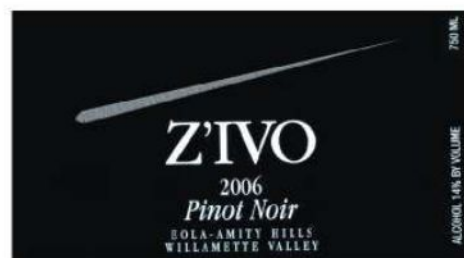




**90 Rocland Estate 2008 Grenache (Barossa Valley); \$21.** Superripe fruit, befitting a hot year, suggests early consumption may be the best option for this supple, luscious wine. There's bits of spicy, leathery complexity to go with the intense black cherry fruit. Drink now-2013. Imported by Rocland Wine Imports. **Editors' Choice.**



**90 Trinchero 2007 Central Park West Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (St. Helena); \$35.** Nice and dry, with firm, hard tannins and rich flavors of blackberries, cherries and dark chocolate. The oak is pretty strong, offering a coating of caramel. Shows a full-bodied, masculine Cabernet character that needs a good decant to aerate the tannins. Should age though 2013, at least.



**90 Z'IVO 2006 Pinot Noir (Eola-Amity Hills); \$35.** This is estate-grown, a mix of five Pinot Noir clones, from an excellent vintage. Perfumed and showing floral and berry accents, the wine hits the palate like a soft, wet kiss. Light and gentle, yet penetrating and seductive, the tannins have been nicely managed and keep the wine, as the winery notes, "disturbingly quaffable."



**89 Kirkland Signature 2007 Signature Series Mountain Cuvée Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); \$18.** Great price for this rich wine. It shows the density and concentration of mountain fruit, and also the tannins, with bone-dry flavors of blackberries and currants as well as hints of licorice and Canadian bacon. Good now with a few hours of decanting, and should develop in the bottle through 2013 or so. **Editors' Choice.**



**89 Magistrate 2006 Limited Production Cabernet Sauvignon (Alexander Valley); \$29.** A little extra time in the bottle has yielded a softly attractive Cabernet filled with lush flavors. It has complex tiers of raspberries, cherries and tobacco, with gentle tannins and a light, spicy touch of sandalwood. Pretty and polished now.



**88 Perry Creek 2007 Zinman Zinfandel (El Dorado); \$14.** A lovely Zinfandel, soft and dry, with luscious cherry, raspberry and sandalwood flavors, dusted with pepper and cocoa. Easy to drink and versatile with everything from pizza to a grilled steak. **Editors' Choice.**

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**88 Viñas del Vero 2007 La Miranda de Secastilla Garnacha (Somontano); \$15.** Sweet and full of raspberry aromas, foresty scents and sandalwood. Overall it's a well-made, intriguing Grenache with a fleshy, sturdy body and deep cherry, berry and chocolate flavors. It's a bit tannic, but that only helps the structure. Finishes nicely, with dry spice and vanilla notes. Imported by San Francisco Wine Exchange.



**87 Kenwood 2009 Sauvignon Blanc (Sonoma County); \$13.** Made in a wonderfully dry, crisp style, Sauvignon Blancs like this fill a much-needed niche in fruit-heavy California. It's zesty and mineral, with lemon, lime and grapefruit flavors. Beautiful as a cocktail sipper, or with the perfect roast chicken.



**87 Kirkland Signature 2007 Signature Series Cabernet Sauvignon (Stags Leap District); \$19.** Softly lush, a nice, fruit-forward Cabernet to drink now. Shows well-ripened blackberry and black currant flavors, finished with a touch of smoky oak. Good price for a Stags Leap Cab.





**87 Pagos del Rey 2007 El Circulo Crianza (Rioja); \$14.** Sort of scratchy and generic on the nose, with reasonably fresh red fruit aromas. The mouthfeel is angular and clipped by piercing acidity, while the flavors are of nice but regular black cherry and plum. Fairly juicy and fresh as a whole. Imported by Luneau USA Inc.



**86 Korbel 2008 Brut Made With Organically Grown Grapes (California); \$16.** This is a nice, dry sparkling wine, rich in citrus, apple, yeasty brioche and spice flavors. The bubbles are a little ragged, giving it a scoury mouthfeel. But for the price, it's a fine bubbly.



**85 Spartico NV Organic Wine Tempranillo (Utiel-Requena); \$12.** A clean, nice, regular Tempranillo with normal black cherry and berry aromas that offer hints of rubber and bacon. The palate is tannic and grabby but balanced for the most part, with pure, basic blackberry and cherry flavors. Modest in its scope, but fresh and untainted. Imported by Natural Merchants LLC.



**84 Poggio Lungo 2007 Morellino di Scansano; \$22.** Good growing conditions in 2007 helped shape this bright, berry-driven wine from southern Tuscany. You'll recognize aromas of cherry, blueberry and mineral backed by a firm texture and sour cherry flavors. This is a simple, easy-drinking expression. Imported by R&R Wine Imports Inc.

## BESTBUYS

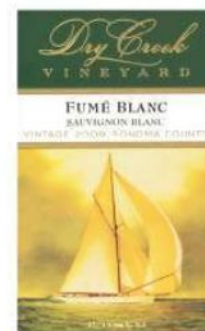


**90 Side Job 2008 Zinfandel (Sonoma County); \$15.** One sip is all it takes to love this wine, if you're a Zinfandel fan. It's bone dry, silky in texture and spicy, with brambly, briary flavors of wild forest berries, red currants, tobacco and beef jerky. Feels really rich and savory, right through the long, peppery finish. And look at that price.



**89 Acrobat 2009 Pinot Gris (Oregon); \$12.** Even better than the excellent 2008 Acrobat, this ups the alcohol to about 13% and gives the impression of dryness, though there might be a trace of residual sugar. In any event, it's loaded with pretty pear fruit flavor, lightly dusted with cinnamon spice, and fills the mouth with its body and gentle hint of spritz. A fine summer sipper.

## BESTBUYS



**89 Dry Creek Vineyard 2009 Fumé Blanc (Sonoma County); \$12.** This is a delicious, balanced Sauvignon Blanc that's the equal of many wines costing much more, which makes it a great value. It features lemon and lime flavors made richer by notes of pineapples and honeysuckle. Entirely unoaked, it's a great cocktail sipper.



**88 Bodegas Franco-Españolas 2006 Rioja Bordon Crianza Tempranillo (Rioja); \$12.** A nice, floral, medium-bodied Rioja that should not steer anyone wrong. The nose is harmonized and not overpowering, while the feel is good and easy and the flavors of berry, plum and mild chocolate oak work well together. Holds its line on the finish as well. Imported by Admiral Imports.



**88 Bonterra 2009 Riesling (Lake County-Mendocino County); \$13.** Ultraclean and bright, as Bonterra's wines nearly always are, this Riesling shows good varietal flavors of citrus fruits, peaches, wildflowers and minerals. It's bone dry, and the acidity is wonderfully mouth-cleansing. Try as an alternative to Sauvignon Blanc or Pinot Grigio.



## BESTBUYS



**87 Line 39 2009 Sauvignon Blanc (Lake County); \$10.** The curve on this wine has been going up and up, and this '09 is their best yet. It's bone dry and savory in acids, with ultraclean citrus, mineral and white flower flavors. Just delicious as a cocktail sipper.



**87 Marqués de Cáceres 2009 Rosé (Rioja); \$9.** Crisp, natural and lightly salinic on the nose, with medium weight, good freshness and solid peach and citrus flavors. This is a standard but nicely done Rioja rosé with a pithy finish and just the right edge to it. Drink liberally with appetizers and you shouldn't go wrong. Imported by Vineyard Brands.



**85 Iranzo Fields 2009 Albero Bobal Rosé (Utiel-Requena); \$6.** Almost red in color, with dusty aromas that mix in a blast of latex and dried cherry notes. The wine is made from organically grown Bobal grapes, and it offers tang and bite along with crisp flavors of plum skins, raspberry and citrus. Almost sour, but not. A solid quaffer for the price. Imported by Latitude Wines, Inc.

## BESTBUYS



**84 Oak Grove 2009 Reserve Sauvignon Blanc (California); \$8.** Bone dry and ultracrisp in acidity, with citrus and lemongrass flavors, this Sauvignon Blanc is very clean and invigorating. Better yet, the everyday price is right.

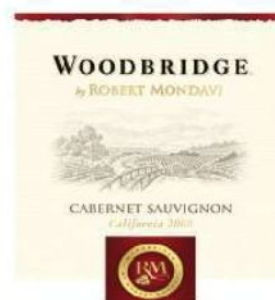


**84 Oak Grove 2009 Reserve Pinot Grigio (California); \$8.** Absolutely dry and tingly in acidity, this citrus-flavored wine is clean and zesty. It's a fine appetizer sipper for cleansing the palate. Serve it with little munchies, like grilled veggies, goat cheese and crackers with crab salad.



**84 Redtree 2009 Pinot Noir (California); \$8.** Good price for an everyday Pinot Noir. It's not particularly complex, but shows a nice, silky texture, with good acidity and firm dryness. The flavors are of cherries and oak.

## BESTBUYS



**84 Woodbridge by Robert Mondavi 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon (California); \$8.** A little thin in flavor, but honest and robust, with thick tannins framing blackberries, cherries, currants and herbs. A very good price for a Cab this easy to drink.



**83 Bota Box 2009 Pinot Grigio (California); \$19/3L.** This boxed wine has some problems, but at the equivalent of \$4.75 a bottle, and with the staying power of its vacuum technology, it's a pretty good buy. Bone dry and crisp, it has pleasant citrus fruit, vanilla and peppery spice flavors.

## SPIRITS



**92 Finlandia Grapefruit Fusion (Altia Corp., Helsinki, Finland); 37.5% abv, \$19.**

Opens with a fruity, slightly overripe aroma, very close to true grapefruit. The flavors of pomelo and lychee are pleasing and more dry than sweet, finishing with a touch of anise and moderate bite.



# SPIRITS



**92** **Van Gogh Oranje** (Van Gogh Vodka, Dirkzwager Distilleries, Schiedam, Holland); 40% abv, \$27. The sweet, high but slightly orange-soda ersatz scent accurately reflects the equally sweet and intensely orange taste of this vodka. Because it finishes smooth, with rounded orange and tangerine notes and a Cognac-like, warming touch of honey, it's addictively sip-pable.

**90** **Finlandia Lime Fusion** (Altia Corp., Helsinki, Finland); 37.5% abv, \$19. Despite a faint lime-lollipop scent, the flavor of this vodka tilted more toward lemon than lime, with perhaps a touch of lime-leaf essence. The subtle flavor and light feel would make for a polished, high-end cocktail.



**88** **Finlandia Tangerine Fusion** (Altia Corp., Helsinki, Finland); 37.5% abv, \$19. The flavors are more reminiscent of pear than orange, and lead to a mouthwatering finish, with just the right amount of bite to balance it out. Juicy, almost too overripe tangerine scent.

# CORRECTION

In the August issue an incorrect image appeared with the following review. Here is the correct review and image.

**94** **Vineyard 7&8 2007 Estate Cabernet Sauvignon** (Spring Mountain); \$125. Bring this bottle straight to the cellar.



# BEER

**87** **Bohemia Clásica** (German Pilsner; Cervceria Cuauhtemoc Moctezuma, Mexico); 5.3% abv, \$9/6 pack. Pours a pale straw color with a small head that falls fast. The aromas are faint but clean, with notes of sweet grains, softly floral hops and a hint of yeast. The taste is clean and well balanced, with nice earthy hops adding a touch of bitterness to the finish alongside the grainy malt backbone. A hint of sweet vanilla bean appears on the finish. Light and thin but not watery; definitely a versatile, food-friendly brew.



# BEER BESTBUYS



**86** **Cable Car Small Batch Lager Beer** (American Adjunct Lager; Cable Car Brewing Co, NY); 4.8% abv, \$7/6 pack. Light straw-colored in the glass. There's a slight metallic note in the bouquet alongside hints of sweet malt. Clean and straightforward in the mouth with an overall light flavor profile, offering hints of citrus and more sweet grain flavors. Light bodied and easy to drink with a clean finish; an excellent session beer.

honeysuckle blossoms combine with the freshness of pressed apples and a bright, high-toned acidity. Smoke, slate and stone kick in to create a long, elegant finish. Overall, a well balanced, enjoyable wine. —A.I.

**88** **Lamoreaux Landing 2009 Yellow Dog Vineyard Riesling** (Finger Lakes); \$20. From start to finish, there's so much going on with Lamoreaux Landing's Yellow Dog. Honey and orange blossom aromas are laced with a whisper of musk. The bright lemon-lime sweetness is balanced elegantly with a distinct minerality evocative of smoke, slate and stone, and a bracing acidity that drives a lingering finish. —A.I.

**88** **Shaw 2007 Dry Riesling** (Finger Lakes); \$18. Benefits of bottle aging show well in this late release by Shaw. Clean and minerally with a shower of freshly squeezed lemon and honeysuckle on the nose, this almost dry Riesling is lush with honey and white peaches on the palate. There's a sleek backbone of steel and slate that adds elegance to a lingering white tea finish. —A.I.

**87** **Damiani 2009 Riesling** (Finger Lakes); \$16. Ripe yellow peaches and cantaloupe combine elegantly with a hint of wet stones on the nose. A nice, tart acidity, steely backbone and a bitter citrus pith finish give this off-dry Riesling structure and balance. —A.I.

**87** **Dr. Konstantin Frank 2008 Dry Riesling** (Finger Lakes); \$15. Quite dry on the palate, this seductive Riesling exhibits aromas of honeyed ginger with a hint of smoke and petrol. Lime and apple flavors combine with a zippy acidity and subtle minerality throughout. —A.I.

**87** **Glenora 2008 Dry Riesling** (Finger Lakes); \$18. This wonderfully refreshing, dry Riesling is redolent of ripe honeydew melon and freshly pressed Granny Smith apples. Lime and a nice steely backbone combine mid-palate with the sour tang of lemon drops and a lingering bitter almond finish. —A.I.

**87** **Glenora 2009 Riesling** (Finger Lakes); \$16. There's hominess to this cheerful, semisweet Riesling that brings apple-sauce and golden honey bears to mind. A touch of pink grapefruit juice and pith, along with

Don't even think about opening it before, say, 2013. All you'll get is a mouthful of hard, sandpapery tannins. But it's a very deeply flavored Cabernet, packed with massive blackberry, black currant, plum and cedar flavors, and there's a granitic minerality that must come from the soil. Very finely crafted. *Cellar Selection.*



refreshing acidity, add finesse to a long, lingering finish. —A.I.

**87 Keuka Spring 2009 Riesling (Finger Lakes); \$14.** Laced with baked apples, ginger and savory spices, there's something unique about the nose on this off-dry Riesling. On the palate, honeyed apples and pears combine with a tart lemon-lime acidity and a hint of bitterness on the finish. —A.I.

**87 Lamoreaux Landing 2009 Semi-Dry Riesling (Finger Lakes); \$13.** Bitter lime peel and an elegant steeliness give structure to the sweet, fresh apples that dominate this off-dry style Riesling. Bright lemon-lime acidity leads to a mouthwatering pucker on the finish. —A.I.

**87 Wagner 2008 Dry Riesling (Finger Lakes); \$13.** This is a gorgeously perfumed Riesling, chock-full of white flowers and ripe, juicy stonefruit, but not at all cloying. Dry on the palate, it exhibits elegant peach and apricot flavors that lead to a long, lingering finish marked by lime peel and a hint of chalk. —A.I.

**86 Billsboro 2009 Riesling (Finger Lakes); \$16.** Bright with fresh apple and pear aromas, this off-dry style Riesling is a sunny, cheerful wine that melds the sweetness of tangerines with a high-toned acidity. —A.I.

**86 Heron Hill 2008 Dry Riesling (New York); \$13.** Subtle aromas of freshly cut grass and crisp Asian pears make this clean, dry Riesling a refreshing sipping wine. A tingly acidity and citrus pith notes linger playfully on the palate. —A.I.

**86 Lakewood 2008 Dry Riesling (Finger Lakes); \$13.** A dry-style Riesling with fresh apple, pear and petrol aromas, and a persistent minerality throughout. It's simple and straightforward, but there's a refreshing lemonade acidity and a hint of lime zest at the finish. —A.I.

**86 Lamoreaux Landing 2009 Dry Riesling (Finger Lakes); \$13.** Melon and jasmine aromas abound in this light, refreshing Riesling offering glimpses of white peach, lime and slate on the palate. A hint of bitter almond adds complexity to the finish. —A.I.

**86 Ravines 2008 Dry Riesling (Finger Lakes); \$17.** Sunny and warm on the

nose with aromas of honey, roasted hazelnuts and a touch of petroleum, this medium-bodied dry Riesling surprises with an unexpected austerity in the mouth. It's an interesting transition, however, resulting in a sleek, steely wine with hints of chalk dust, bitter lime and canned pineapple flavors. —A.I.

**86 Rooster Hill 2008 Dry Riesling (Finger Lakes); \$16.** Overall, this elegant wine is dry with just a touch of stonefruit sweetness. Lemon yellow in color, there's brightness throughout with ripe apricots, honey and yellow freesia on the nose. A polished minerality and orange pith bitterness help keep things in balance. —A.I.

**85 Arbor Hill 2009 Riesling (Finger Lakes); \$13.** There's nothing subtle about the powerful elderflower, jasmine tea and ripe melon aromas that perfume this heady Riesling. It's made in a ripe, off-dry style but finishes surprisingly dry. An interesting wine, but the aromatics may be a bit dizzying. —A.I.

**85 Hazlitt 1852 Vineyards 2009 Riesling (Finger Lakes); \$12.** A perfect companion to the fall harvest season, this easy-drinking Riesling is evocative of candied apples and warm apple pie spice. There's not a lot of complexity, but it's light and fresh in the mouth with a puckery lime and sour patch candy finish. —A.I.

**85 Heron Hill 2008 Semi-Sweet Riesling (New York); \$13.** Mouthwatering, high-toned acidity and a pleasant lemon-lime bitterness keeps the honeyed apple characteristics of this semisweet style Riesling in balance. Elegant mineral and petrol notes lead to a lingering, puckery finish. —A.I.

**85 Keuka Spring 2009 Semi Sweet Riesling (Finger Lakes); \$14.** Mulled apple cider, ginger and candied orange peel aromas perfume this easy-drinking Riesling. Tart acidity and a kick of apple pie spice meld playfully with the semisweet palate. A nice wine for casual autumn entertaining. —A.I.

**85 Knapp 2009 Riesling (Finger Lakes); \$15.** Sweetened with a concentration of juicy, ripe pineapple and tropical fruit on both the nose and palate, this is an uncomplicated and fruity off-dry Riesling. A tart, zingy acidity balances the sweetness on the finish. —A.I.

**LOS VASCOS**

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*Lafite in Chile*

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**85 Knapp 2009 Dry Riesling (Finger Lakes); \$15.** A distinct headiness to the gardenia blossoms that perfume this Riesling contrasts with the bright, tropical pineapple, candied fruit and tangerine flavors that dominate in the mouth. A touch of minerality and racy acidity round out the finish. —A.I.

**85 Swedish Hill 2009 Riesling (Finger Lakes); \$16.** This off-dry Riesling seems herbal on the nose with a hint of fresh cut grass and bark, but in the mouth, it's all bright, ripe tropical fruits and tangerine. Medium bodied with a racy acidity to offset the sweetness. —A.I.

**85 Treleaven 2008 Semi-dry Riesling (Finger Lakes); \$14.** Distinctly grassy, vegetal aromas add savoriness to this light-bodied, semi-dry style Riesling. On the palate, there are hints of quince, lemon and apple tinged with slate adding depth to an otherwise uncomplicated wine. —A.I.

**85 Waters Crest 2009 Dry Riesling (New York); \$24.** Intense aromas of day lilies, honey and spiced canned peaches abound in this not quite "dry" Riesling. The mouth feels a bit confectioned with so much sunny orange marmalade and lemondrops flavors, but the finish ends drier with a hint of bitter orange pith. —A.I.

## OREGON WHITE WINES

### PINOT GRIS

**90 Ponzi 2009 Pinot Gris (Willamette Valley); \$17.** Strikingly spicy, with the scents and flavors of Bosch pears, this textural, racy wine has a bit of refreshing effervescence as well. Subtle traces of citrus, pineapple and Asian pear are woven through, and the bracing acidity sets it up well for richly sauced poultry or pasta dishes. —P.G.

**90 Vista Hills 2008 Flagler Estate Pinot Gris (Dundee Hills); \$18.** Another fine estate-grown Pinot Gris from Vista Hills, with plenty of green apple and Bosch pear fruit, along with some light cinnamon spice. There is also a suggestion of flower in both the nose and the mouth, but overall it's a bigger wine than that, with the fruit front and center. —P.G.

**89 Acrobat 2009 Pinot Gris (Oregon); \$12.** Even better than the excellent 2008 Acrobat, this ups the alcohol to about 13% and gives the impression of dryness, though there might be a trace of residual sugar. In any event, it's loaded with pretty pear fruit flavor, lightly dusted with cinnamon spice, and fills the mouth with its body and gentle hint of spritz. A fine summer sipper. **Best Buy.** —P.G.

**89 King Estate 2008 Domaine Pinot Gris (Oregon); \$25.** Lightly herbal, scented with tart pear and tasting the same, this organically grown estate wine is King Estate's best Pinot Gris. Their signature bottling sets a good standard for the grape in Oregon; this elevates it with more detail, density and personality. The alcohol is a sensible 13%, allowing subtle green fruit and herb grace notes to emerge. —P.G.

**89 LaVelle Vineyards 2008 Pinot Gris (Willamette Valley); \$18.** A light, almost delicate wine, with pretty pear fruit and a hint of sweetness. The balance is just right, and the wine shows some added flair as it wraps into a finish that seems to gather strength while adding floral and lightly honeyed highlights. —P.G.

**89 Rex Hill 2009 Pinot Gris (Willamette Valley); \$16.** A beautifully rendered, light and detailed Oregon Pinot Gris, this is redolent of spring flowers and citrus peel, flavored with an elegant blend of pineapple, Asian pear, jicama and white pepper. Very fresh and spicy. —P.G.

**89 Seven Hills 2009 Pinot Gris (Oregon); \$16.** A fragrant burst of pear blossom, citrus, melon and green apple aromas lead into similar flavors. Elegant and spicy, this nicely captures the fleshiness of Oregon Pinot Gris. About 10% was finished in oak barrels, the rest in stainless. —P.G.

**89 Thistle 2009 Pinot Gris (Dundee Hills); \$15.** From organically grown grapes, this is for acid lovers. Tart to the point of sour, with lemony fruit and a mouth-puckering presence, it rocks with goat cheeses, and cuts through cream sauces. Super penetration and length. —P.G.

**88 A to Z Wineworks 2009 Pinot Gris (Oregon); \$12.** The current downturn in demand for both grapes and expensive wines only helps A to Z; there is more good fruit to pur-

chase, and plenty of demand at a \$12 price point. This new Pinot Gris is fresh and racy, with a mineral-driven acidity underlying the clean fruit, tasting of pears and pear skin. **Best Buy.** —P.G.

**88 Boedecker Cellars 2008 Old Vine Pinot Gris (Willamette Valley); \$18.** Old vine Pinot Gris? Sourced from the Jacob Hart vineyard, it's about 20 years old. Lightly beery, yeasty, with Asian pear and buttered apple providing the main flavor interest. This is an elegant, nicely balanced wine, with fruit and acid in perfect proportion. —P.G.

**88 Coelho 2009 Renovação Pinot Gris (Willamette Valley); \$16.** Fermented in a mix of stainless steel barrels and neutral oak barrels, this was fermented with native yeast and given sur lie aging. It went through 100% malolactic fermentation, which has softened the mid-palate, a mix of lemon, grapefruit and Satsuma orange. There are still traces of phenolic bite, but those citrus rind flavors have been well rounded also, though this carries some heat in the finish. —P.G.

**88 Coeur de Terre 2009 Pinot Gris (McMinnville); \$17.** Already showing some tawny color, this is a drink-up-quickly bottle. Softly fruity, it also carries a hint of residual sweetness, honeysuckle and Earl Grey tea. Right now it is drinking nicely, with pear tart, brioche and a little honey and vanilla crème running through the finish. —P.G.

**87 Evergreen Vineyards 2008 Pinot Gris (Oregon); \$17.** A solid, straightforward, all-purpose Pinot Gris, this offers firm and spicy pear and apple fruit, some crisp phenolics giving it a racy edge, and a little bite to the back of the palate. It has the acidity to stand up to creamy pasta sauces or soft cheeses. —P.G.

**87 Illahe 2009 Pinot Gris (Willamette Valley); \$13.** Fresh and straightforward, this stainless steel-fermented Pinot Gris has simple, pleasant pear fruit flavors, and just a suggestion of caramel running through it. Perfectly suited for every day quaffing. —P.G.

**87 Spindrift Cellars 2009 Pinot Gris (Willamette Valley); \$14.** Whole cluster fermented in stainless steel, this is big and spicy, with a lovely textural impact. The aromas and flavors run to honeyed pears and very ripe



apples; the finish is resonant and surprisingly mature for a 2009. Drink up. —P.G.

**86 Kramer 2008 Pinot Gris (Yamhill-Carlton District); \$15.** Easy-drinking and varietal, this displays fresh pear fruit cut with pineapple. It's forward and juicy, a wine to drink chilled with picnic foods. —P.G.

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## PINOT BLANC

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**92 Thistle 2009 Pinot Blanc (Dundee Hills); \$16.** This lively, spritzzy Pinot Blanc, made from organically grown grapes, matches the previous vintage with lovely fruit—golden apple, pink grapefruit and pickled watermelon. It freshens and lifts the palate as it moves into a finish that keeps the fruit while adding a strong vein of mineral and wet rock. —P.G.

**90 J. Scott Cellars 2008 Pinot Blanc (Willamette Valley); \$14.** Dry, delicate, with a fine-tuned palate suggestive of a German wine, this lovely Pinot Blanc mixes citrus and pear in the body, and rolls into a graceful finish with juicy acidity. The length and mouthfeel are European; the fruit definitely New World. **Best Buy.** —P.G.

**87 Spindrift Cellars 2009 Pinot Blanc (Willamette Valley); \$16.** Soft and forward, with ripe and lightly oxidized flavors, this is a solid, ready-to-drink, fruity style. A full mid-palate tastes of golden apples and hints at orange liqueur in the finish. Drink up. —P.G.

**87 Torii Mor 2008 Pinot Blanc (Rogue Valley); \$20.** Lightly lemony, slightly waxy in the nose, with interesting details of green berries, yellow fruits and citrus oils, this wine sneaks up on you. It's lively and clean, with flavors much like a crisp, stainless steel-fermented Chardonnay. —P.G.

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## VIOGNIER

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**91 Abacela 2009 Viognier (Umpqua Valley); \$20.** Abacela produces a dense, mineral-driven style of Viognier, vertically layered with a mix of citrus skins and fruits, notably grapefruit and pineapple. There's even a finishing kiss of honey, though the wine is quite dry. A delight. —P.G.

**91 Illahe 2009 Viognier (Willamette Valley); \$15.** Delightfully aromatic, this evocative, low-alcohol (12.5%) Viognier sends up pungent, piney aromas of citrus peel and flesh. A mix of lemon, orange and grapefruit flavors, smooth and clean, roll into a seamless and satisfying finish. **Best Buy.** —P.G.

**90 Folin Cellars 2008 Viognier (Rogue Valley); \$25.** Estate-grown, vibrant, and spicy, this southern Oregon Viognier opens with a penetrating bouquet of flower, spice and citrus. The wine really comes alive in the mouth, with palate-pleasing flavors of lime, quinine and melon. You'd almost swear there was a nip of gin in the mix. Delicious chilled. —P.G.

**90 J. Scott Cellars 2008 Viognier (Rogue Valley); \$18.** Though it is listed at 14.2% alcohol, this is a pretty wine, with feminine grace rather than masculine muscle. Floral and fresh, it smells like fresh lemons and white peaches and flavors follow right along in that same vein. Balanced and polished, it shows exemplary winemaking skills on the part of Jonathan Scott Oberlander. —P.G.

**90 Melrose Vineyards 2009 Viognier (Umpqua Valley); \$18.** This new release from Melrose fills the mouth with flavor; it runs from orange blossom to Meyer lemon to candied pineapple, finally settling into a strong citrus/tropical blend of delicious fruit flavors. It seems to strike a perfect balance, staying lively and well-defined, without becoming hot or bitter. —P.G.

**87 Springhouse Cellar 2008 Voulez-Vous Viognier (Columbia Valley (OR)); \$18.** Juicy and fresh, this light and appealing Viognier shows crisp citrus and stone fruit flavors, some pineapple and stone, and a lick of spun sugar in the finish. —P.G.

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## RIESLING

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**92 David Hill 2009 Estate Riesling (Willamette Valley); \$16.** For anyone seeking an American version of a fine German Kabinett, David Hill's Rieslings should be your first stop. Vintage after vintage this winery nails it. Flower, fruit, citrus, light lemony honey, Jonathan apple, Asian pear, it just goes on and on in the mouth. At 12% alcohol, you might expect a





sweeter wine, but the juicy acids keep it nice and dry through the finish. —P.G.

**88 Cathedral Ridge 2008 Riesling (Columbia Valley); \$18.** An unusual combination of flavors that are searingly tart and yet seem to have a sugary core, this is scented with honeysuckle and orange blossom, and opens out quickly into a fruitbowl of ripe, tangy flavors. Apples, pears, oranges, candied lemons, even a hint of papaya are all in the mix. But be ready for some tongue-tangling acidity. —P.G.

**88 Penner-Ash 2008 Riesling (Willamette Valley); \$18.** A tongue-scraping, bone-dry style reminiscent of an Australian Riesling, this aromatic, juicy and lightly effervescent wine tastes of citrus fruits and skins, along with hints of grapefruit and cucumber. There's plenty of acidity to cut through rich sauces. —P.G.

**87 Coeur de Terre 2009 Riesling (Willamette Valley); \$19.** Made half in stainless steel and half in neutral oak, this comes from 34-year-old vines. It's quite dry, with interesting nuances of sweet grass, clover and green apple. The acids are borderline sour; try this with a bit of prosciutto and a salty cheese. —P.G.

**85 Château Bianca 2008 Riesling (Willamette Valley); \$12.** Thick in the mouth, with sour lemon and barely ripe pineapple flavors, somewhat balanced against more delicate orange peel. The alcohol is 10%, yet despite the residual sugar the wine tastes quite tart. —P.G.

## OTHER WHITE WINES

**90 Abacela 2009 Albariño (Umpqua Valley); \$18.** Estate-grown, this captures the racy minerality of the Spanish grape, while amping it up to New World fruit standards. So you get a fruit-powered richness, with citrus and peach, along with lively acidity and a steely core. The new vintage marks a big step forward for this variety at Abacela. —P.G.

**90 Illahe 2009 Estate Grüner Veltliner (Willamette Valley); \$15.** Why not an Oregon Grüner? With its nuanced aromas trailing flint and smoke through a core of grapefruit, pineapple and melon, this is a welcome warm weather wine. Just 12.5% alcohol, a solid

midpalate and a hint of vanilla cookie in the lingering finish. **Best Buy.** —P.G.

**90 Viento 2009 Underwood Mountain Vineyard Grüner Veltliner (Columbia Gorge); \$20.** A rare wine in the Northwest. It is a lightly floral, mineral-infused, vivid wine, with the white peppery character of the grape, and a mix of citrus fruit flavors somewhat reminiscent of New Zealand Sauvignon Blancs. Excellent penetration and structure. —P.G.

**89 Adelsheim 2009 Ribbon Springs Vineyard Auxerrois (Ribbon Ridge); \$22.** Auxerrois, a cross between Pinot Noir and Gouais Blanc, creates an aromatic, lively, citrus and pear fruit-flavored white wine with a delicious mix of fruit, spice and even a hint of white chocolate. Fresh and more interesting than many Chardonnays, this is a sure-fire crowd-pleaser at any picnic or barbecue. —P.G.

**89 Viento 2009 Allegre Vineyard Verona (Columbia Gorge); \$14.** Winemaker Rich Cushman notes that this is a "field blend" of Pinot Gris, Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc from this vineyard's single bearing acre. It is a delightful wine, and the three grapes all contribute to the mixed scents of grass, citrus and melon; and the fresh fruit flavors that run to cool green and yellow fruits and berries. A nice finish suggests fresh-cut cantaloupe. **Best Buy.** —P.G.

**88 Cliff Creek 2009 Marsanne-Roussanne (Southern Oregon); \$22.** Round and fruity, with a tasty mix of apples, peaches and citrus, this tastes like fruit, not barrel, and would be an excellent choice if a hearty, non-oaky white wine is called for. There's good balance and length, with a resonant hint of minerality in the finish. —P.G.

**88 Z'IVO 2008 Mika White Wine (Willamette Valley); \$18.** This is one-third Pinot Gris, two-thirds Chardonnay, medium straw colored, with interesting scents of beeswax, sweet hay and light toast. The fruit is delicate, a mix of apple and pear with a hint of cinnamon. But it lingers gracefully, leaving a lemony trail. —P.G.

**85 Springhouse Cellar 2008 Drawing A Blanc Sauvignon Blanc (Columbia Gorge); \$18.** Young, yeasty, almost to the point of being beery, this thin Sauvignon Blanc

recalls a Vinho Verde. Cucumber and fennel flavors dominate, along with plenty of acidity. —P.G.

## DESSERT WINES

**94 Abacela 2009 Blanco Dulce Viognier (Umpqua Valley); \$30/375 ml.** This late-harvest Viognier is so dense, so lush with aromas, that it defies description. Flowers, candied fruits, caramel, vanilla, English breakfast tea, even a bit of tobacco—this is one of those wines that just keeps on going. Fascinating, rich, yet vibrant with excellent acidity, this is a wine that any dessert wine lover should experience. **Editors' Choice.** —P.G.

**87 David Hill 2006 Port Muscat (Willamette Valley); \$28.** This might be called banana Port, for a rich, banana flavor is what dominates. Of course, with Muscat, you will also find tangerine and orange, like a tangy sauce over the richer, creamier banana. You've got to think—pair this with a banana split? Could be the dessert of the century! —P.G.

## WASHINGTON VIOGNIER

**92 àMaurice 2008 Viognier (Columbia Valley); \$25.** Barrel fermented, pure Viognier with a vibrant core of juicy, lemon/lime fruit. There's pink grapefruit and sweet pineapple, all set against pleasing phenolics that provide a firm framework. The mouthfeel is lush and the finish clear and lightly mineral. —P.G.

**92 àMaurice 2009 Sparrow Viognier (Walla Walla); \$33.** The second vintage from the estate vineyard, this is rich and honeyed, scented with bee pollen, candle wax, hints of pine needle. Meyer lemon, caramel, honey and more coat the palate. Still very young, but all the pieces are there. —P.G.

**91 àMaurice 2007 Viognier (Columbia Valley); \$25.** Fine effort, lightly toasty, lightly buttery, still varietal with pleasing lime, orange marmalade and suggestions of pineapple. Excellent mouthfeel and balance, with exceptional smoothness. —P.G.

**91 Ott & Murphy 2008 Viognier (Columbia Valley); \$20.** An interest-



ing debut from this new producer. The blend includes 20% Roussanne, co-fermented in neutral French oak. It was aged sur lie and given monthly battonage, and no malolactic fermentation. The wine is big, with juicy tropical fruit/bubblegum flavors, skin phenolics, great texture and baking spice highlights. Impressive. —P.G.

**90 Coeur d'Alene Cellars 2008 L'Artiste Viognier (Washington); \$24.** This is 100% Viognier, all stainless steel fermented, with more guts and concentration than the creamier barrel-fermented Viognier from this winery. Lime and pineapple fruit flavors are bracing and clean, moving into light peach and tangerine as they persist in the mouth. —P.G.

**90 Lullaby 2008 Viognier (Walla Walla); \$28.** Pure Viognier from the Dwelley Vineyard, barrel-fermented, aged on the lees in neutral oak. A light and elegant style, creamy and loaded with Key lime fruit and texture along with nectarine and light tropical fruits. Complex and lingering, with clarity and definition. —P.G.

**90 Seven Hills 2009 Talcott Vineyard Viognier (Columbia Valley); \$20.** The smooth, silky, satiny nose erupts with layers of lemon, lime, tangerine and melon. The pretty, slightly waxy mouthfeel is not unctuous but has good body, precise definition, and no jagged edges. The alcohol stays under 14%, and the finish is round and persistent. —P.G.

**88 Coeur d'Alene Cellars 2008 Viognier (Washington); \$20.** Creamy and smooth, this barrel-fermented Viognier has peach and citrus fruit, with grace notes of ginger and nutmeg. There is even a hint of honey as it gathers strength in the back of the throat, with noticeable alcohol also. —P.G.

**88 Watermill 2008 Viognier (Columbia Valley); \$14.** A quick sniff and you're converted to this cool, refreshing white wine. The aromas carry the promise of citrus rind and sea salt; that tangy character livens up the cool fruit flavors also. Aged in stainless and neutral oak, just enough to soften up the midpalate while retaining its crisp definition. —P.G.

**87 Gamache Vintners 2008 Velida Estate Viognier (Columbia Valley); \$18.** Though the bottle says this hits 14.8% alcohol, it does not have the weight and depth that

you might expect from that number. The heat is there, but the fruit is restrained, lightly herba- ceous, showing some mild lemon and tangerine flavors, and a lick of quinine. —P.G.

## PINOT GRIS/GRIGIO

**88 Waterbrook 2008 Pinot Gris (Columbia Valley); \$13.** Bold and fruity, this runs through a spectrum from tart lemon to ripe pineapple to hints of something riper and sweeter, like banana or papaya. A good alternative to Chardonnay for those who favor fruit over oak. **Best Buy.** —P.G.

**87 Buried Cane 2008 Pinot Grigio (Washington); \$15.** Light and juicy, with fresh apple flavors and good acidity. A good wine for serving chilled and enjoying outdoors. —P.G.

**87 Milbrandt 2008 Traditions Pinot Gris (Columbia Valley); \$13.** Lightly spritzy, sharp and focused, this Pinot Gris brings in apples and pears, fruit skin and wet stone. It's nicely balanced and ready for food. —P.G.

## RIESLING

**93 Dunham Cellars 2008 Lewis Estate Vineyard Riesling (Columbia Valley); \$22.** You will find great concentration in this fruit, a beguiling play of citrus, grapefruit, peach, apricot and light tropical. It's infused with a resinous streak that complements the fruit and lifts the midpalate. Sugars and acids are in perfect counterpoint—it's close to dry but with such richness that it could take on spicy Asian fare. **Editors' Choice.** —P.G.

**92 Gamache Vintners 2008 Estate Riesling (Columbia Valley); \$18.** This ripe and rich Riesling continues a string of successes with this grape from Gamache Vintners. The alcohol is just 12.5%, and the wine has some light sweetness, but what stands out best is the succulent mix of tropical fruits. Big and plush flavors of banana, papaya, guava and pineapple come through, yet the wine retains its balance and detail. —P.G.

**91 Arbor Crest 2009 Dionysus Vineyard Riesling (Columbia Valley); \$8.** This is fruit sourced from a 1972 planting—

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single-vineyard, old-vine Riesling at an amazing price. Done in a big, round, fruity, off-dry style, it's loaded with sweet pineapple, Meyer lemon and honey peach flavors. The fruit concentration is spectacular, and yet the wine retains enough acidity to feel balanced against the 3.5% residual sugar. Serve with hot and spicy Asian fare, or with a peach cobbler for dessert. **Best Buy.** —P.G.

## 91 J. Bookwalter 2009 Anecdote Riesling (Columbia Valley); \$15.

This is an interesting style, with good density and about 1% residual sugar. The sweetness does not show; this is almost dry, with compact fruit flavors of lemon, orange, candied pineapple, hints of pear and a firm thread through the middle that gives it some phenolic bite. Drink chilled and it will stand up well to firm seafood such as halibut. —P.G.

## 91 Seven Hills 2009 Riesling (Columbia Valley); \$14.

One of the most underrated Rieslings from Washington, Seven Hills always delivers the goods. This is off-dry but drinks as dry. Bonus: the alcohol is around 11%. Wonderfully fragrant and stony, it seems dusted with lemon and honey, tea and a hint of orange marmalade. In the mouth it turns rich and substantial, yet the floral highlights remain. **Best Buy.** —P.G.

## 91 Tempus Cellars 2009 Evergreen Vineyard Riesling (Columbia Valley); \$16.

An impressive first Riesling from Tempus Cellars, using grapes from one of Washington's premier Riesling vineyards. Refreshing and lively, loaded with citrus, green apple and light pineapple fruit flavors, this warm-weather sipping wine is quite bracing, with residual sugar just over 1% and alcohol at a moderate 11.8% —P.G.

## 91 Zero One Vintners 2008 Golden Delicious Riesling (Columbia Valley); \$16.

Sourced from Gamache vineyard grapes, this is a fine follow-up to Zero One's debut vintage. It's packed with fruit flavors, running the gamut from Meyer lemon to candied papaya. The natural acidity keeps it all in balance and perfectly counterpoints the residual sugar, pegged at 2.1%. **Editors' Choice.** —P.G.

## 88 Chateau Ste. Michelle 2009 Riesling (Columbia Valley); \$9.

Lovely aromas pour from the glass, a heady mix of lime, Asian pear, cucumber and apple. In the mouth some sweet honey pours over the crisp fruit, and

the wine feels lush and perfectly melded, despite its youth. Residual sugar is under 2% and the alcohol just 12%. **Best Buy.** —P.G.

## 88 Kana 2008 Katie Mae White Table Wine Riesling (Columbia Valley); \$14.

Though labeled simply White Table Wine, this is all Riesling, done in an off-dry (3.1% residual sugar) style. The fruit is a powerful burst of apricot and peach, annotated with honey and caramel apples. It's sweet enough to have a little brown sugar-style graininess as well; could work with some desserts but also with spicy foods if the wine is well chilled. —P.G.

## 88 Patit Creek Cellars 2009 Sagemoor Vineyards Riesling (Columbia Valley); \$16.

Give this wine some airing out to let the SO<sub>2</sub> blow off, and it will reward you with a pleasant mix of orange peel, sweet citrus and honeydew fruit. The residual sugar is 1.35%, but it feels a bit sugary in the mouth—definitely in the off-dry camp. Some of the fruit is from a 1973 Sagemoor block, among the oldest Riesling in Washington. —P.G.

## 87 Chateau Ste. Michelle 2009 Harvest Select Riesling (Columbia Valley); \$9.

A new offering from the country's largest producer of Rieslings, this fits an emerging off-dry category, with 11% alcohol and 4.7% residual sugar. It's a slightly sweeter companion to the winery's popular Columbia Valley bottling, with more of the honey and tea, less of the cool fruit flavors. **Best Buy.** —P.G.

## 85 Columbia 2008 Cellarmaster's Riesling (Columbia Valley); \$12.

Nicely perfumed with a musky/grapey scent, this low alcohol (10.4%) sweet Riesling is pleasant and clean, but a bit attenuated. It has plenty of sugary honey and some simple canned peach fruit, but stops there. —P.G.

## 85 Covey Run 2008 Reserve Late Harvest Riesling (Columbia Valley); \$12.

Despite the reserve and late harvest designations, this fits in more comfortably with a standard, off-dry Washington Riesling. The 4% residual sugar is muted by good acidity and firm pear and peach fruit. There's some phenolic bite in the finish, and a hint of plastic. —P.G.

# ROUSSANNE

## 91 Maison Bleue 2008 La Vie Douce Roussanne (Horse Heaven Hills); \$20.

Here is an off-dry Roussanne absolutely bursting with delicious flavors of Meyer lemon, breakfast tea, yellow tropical fruits and hints of papaya. It's all set against vibrant natural acidity that keeps it food-friendly rather than limiting it to dessert. —P.G.

## 88 J. Scott Cellars 2008 Roussanne (Columbia Valley); \$18.

Most likely sourced from Washington grapes, this is plump and pleasing, peachy and polished. Ripe, round fruit flavors roll into a bright, slightly hot finish. Peach skin phenolics linger in the mouth, putting a fine edge on the flavors and setting up the palate for the next sip. —P.G.

## 85 SuLei Cellars 2009 Roussanne (Walla Walla); \$18.

Celery and raw wood in the nose, then some light, green fruits come into play in the mouth. As it breathes open there are floral overtones and a hint of honey—a glimmer of varietal character. —P.G.

# OTHER WHITE WINES

## 90 Francis Tannahill 2007 Dragonfly Gewürztraminer (Washington); \$25.

Unctuous, floral and perfumed, this Washington-sourced Gewürztraminer is bold and fruity, lush and mouthfilling. It spreads out gracefully and fully across the palate, coating the tongue with a honeyed mix of citrus and tropical fruits, spiced up with a hint of garlic chive. Dense and concentrated, this is sure to appeal to those who love this grape. —P.G.

## 90 Kana 2008 Masterpiece Elephant Mountain Vineyard Reserve (Yakima Valley); \$20.

Impressive. This Viognier/Marsanne/Roussanne blend showcases substantial, layered fruit flavors of citrus skin, citrus pulp, grapefruit and white peach. The Viognier was done in stainless, the other grapes in barrel, bringing in subtle notes of vanilla. Spicy, full-bodied and just plain delicious. —P.G.

## 89 Z'IVO 2007 Three White Wine White Blend (Washington-Oregon); \$18.

An unusual mix of Melon (from Eyrie) and Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc



(from Washington's Lonesome Springs vineyard). All grapes were barrel-fermented, and the blend works nicely. This wine has a supple, creamy mouthfeel, wrapping its citrus, pineapple and Meyer lemon fruit in buttery toast, all nicely balanced. —P.G.

**88 Cadaretta 2009 sbs Sauvignon Blanc-Semillon (Columbia Valley); \$23.** An Aussie-style blend of 78% Sauvignon Blanc and 22% Sémillon. It's been a real success for Cadaretta, and this is in the same mold as previous efforts. Tasted just prior to release, it was loaded with crisp, primary fruit flavors of green apple, melon and grapefruit. Nice texture, and just a hint of barrel toast too. —P.G.

**87 Shooting Star 2007 Aligoté (Washington); \$13.** This unique wine, made in California by Jed Steele, is sourced from Washington's only planting of Aligoté. Bright and spicy, it's anchored with solid apple/pear fruit flavors and zippy acidity. —P.G.

**86 Waterbrook 2008 Mélange Blanc (Columbia Valley); \$15.** Off-dry with a candied orange character, this is indeed a mélange, including portions of seven different white wine grapes. It's an interesting wine, though might prove a bit challenging to match to food. Perhaps a curry? —P.G.

## IDAHO

### RIESLING

**88 Ste. Chapelle 2008 Dry Riesling (Snake River Valley); \$8.** Ste. Chapelle pioneered modern-era viticulture in Idaho, and for many years Riesling was the winery's main calling card. This new release, from the newly minted Snake River Valley AVA, showcases many of the region's strengths—delicate detail, honeysuckle and citrus blossom aromas mixed with citrus rind flavors, and a pleasing minerality. **Best Buy.** —P.G.

**88 Ste. Chapelle 2008 Special Harvest Riesling (Snake River Valley); \$10.** Lovely natural acidity keeps this sweet wine light on its feet, underscoring the honeyed pear fruit flavors with grapefruit and a hint of minerality. For a wine in this price range, with 11,000 case production levels, it's a marvelous achievement. **Best Buy.** —P.G.

## CALIFORNIA RED WINES

### CABERNET SAUVIGNON

**96 Chappellet 2007 Pritchard Hill Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); \$135.** This is a monster Cabernet, in the best sense. Comprised of all five Bordeaux varieties, it's bone dry, enormously complex and firmly masculine, with very big, hard tannins. Concentration on the flavors shows layers of blackberries, black currants, blueberries, mocha, violets, sweet charred oak and a firm grounding of minerals. An outstanding wine from the Pritchard Hill region east of the Silverado Trail, but one that needs cellar time to resolve the tannins. Better after 2013, and should develop for many years after that. **Cellar Selection.** —S.H.

**95 Ghost Block 2007 Single Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Yountville); \$100.** A terrific Cabernet you want to cellar for a good 5–6 years, at the very least, and could go far longer. Shows what Yountville can do in a good year. The wine is very dry and more minerally than further north, yet is extraordinarily rich in blackberries, chocolate-covered cherries and casis, with a perfumed scent of violets. The mouthfeel is all velvet and satin—so pretty and refined. **Cellar Selection.** —S.H.

**95 Robert Mondavi 2007 Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); \$135.** Bone dry and utterly balanced, with deeply powerful, long-lasting flavors of blackberries and black currants and an intense, but integrated, coating of smoky oak. But it's also very tannic. Nothing soft about this wine. As fine a cellar candidate as any Mondavi Reserve in years. Should develop for 12, 15, even 20 years. **Cellar Selection.** —S.H.

**95 Trinchero 2007 Cloud's Nest Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Mount Veeder); \$50.** A lovely Cabernet, brimming with complex blackberry, cherry, mineral, tobacco and cedar flavors that impress for their sheer power. Shows the firm, hard tannins this mountain always lends Cabs, but they're so finely ground, the wine is drinkable now with a good decanting. Should age well for a decade. **Editors' Choice.** —S.H.

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**94 Chappellet 2007 Signature Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); \$42.** This is the winery's basic Cabernet, but there's nothing common about it. It's dry and complex and moderately age-worthy, a hillside Cabernet that revels in its plush, firm tannins and ripe fruit. There's a minerality that seems to come from the soil, with expressive blackberry, currant, chocolate and anise flavors. Really fine now after a decant, and should develop through this decade. —S.H.

**94 Silverado 2006 Solo Cabernet Sauvignon (Stags Leap District); \$90.** Not ready to open now, it's just too tannic, although the flavors are so ripe and lush, they erupt right through the numbing astringency. Floods the mouth with ripe red stone fruits, berries and currants, as well as earthier notes of herbs, carob and minerals. The oak is strongly sensed, but entirely in keeping with the wine's volume. Cellar this very fine wine until at least 2012, and it should develop for many years thereafter. **Cellar Selection.** —S.H.

**93 Cuvaion 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Mount Veeder); \$39.** A beautiful Cabernet, whose mountain origins show in the firm tannins and concentrated blackberry and black currant fruit. Notes of minerals and violets complicate things, as does rich oak. Very fine and delicious, but obviously needs time in the cellar. Should develop well over the next 6–10 years. **Cellar Selection.** —S.H.

**93 Ghost Block 2007 Estate Cabernet Sauvignon (Oakville); \$60.** A beautiful Cabernet. Dark, dry and elegantly structured, it has classic Napa tannins and is nicely trimmed in acidity. The flavors are complex and delicious, suggesting ripe blackberries, black currants and cedar. Drink now–2015. —S.H.

**93 Oakville Winery 2007 Estate Grown & Produced Cabernet Sauvignon (Oakville); \$46.** Very ripe and extracted, almost jammy, with primary fruit flavors of blackberries, black cherries, red plums, currants, dark chocolate and spices. Delicious and noble, but kind of immature. Give it 4–6 years to soften and integrate, and it could develop even longer. **Cellar Selection.** —S.H.

**93 Trinchero 2007 Haystack Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Atlas Peak); \$50.** A wonderful Cabernet, rich and dry. The

alcohol is fairly high, but in keeping with the wine's power. The fruity blackberry and currant flavors are balanced by refreshingly earthy notes of olives and sweet herbs. Should develop through 2013. —S.H.

**92 Cali 351 2006 Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); \$49.** This is a big, vital Cabernet, rich in fruit and sweetly smoked oak, and the tannins are classic Napa Valley, softly complex and ripe. Really strikes you for the delicious flavors of blackberries, cherries, currants, licorice, mocha and dried herbs. Now–2013. —S.H.

**92 Star Lane Vineyard 2006 Cabernet Sauvignon (Santa Ynez Valley); \$42.** Quite a sophisticated Cab, and one that shows the promise of Happy Canyon, which became an appellation this year. The wine is much drier and leaner than anything in Napa, but quite elegant and intense in blackberries, black currants and dried herbs. It's a worthy successor to the very fine 2005. The alcohol is 15.1%. —S.H.

**92 Tor Kenward 2007 Cimarossa Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Howell Mountain); \$75.** A very boldly flavored and distinguished wine, although it's also very tannic. Shows the intensely concentrated flavors of mountain Napa Cabernet, flooding the palate with blackberries and black currants, and the finish is long and savory. Yet those tannins interfere with true palate enjoyment. Should age easily throughout the next 8–10 years. **Cellar Selection.** —S.H.

**92 Trinchero 2007 Chicken Ranch Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Rutherford); \$35.** A seriously good wine. Shows classic elegance in the dryness, fine tannins and restrained flavors of blackberries, black currants and cedar. Feels really refined in the mouth, with an herbaceousness that both grounds it and balances the fruit. Now–2013. —S.H.

**91 Rutherford Ranch 2005 Abela Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Rutherford); \$75.** An enormously rich, compelling but young, Cabernet. Really impresses for its sour cherry and blackberry candy flavors, and the sophisticated layering of smoky, vanilla-scented oak. Feels ultra-refined, but also quite tannic. Needs time. Better after 2013, with proper storage. **Cellar Selection.** —S.H.

The Buying Guide includes ratings and reviews of new releases and selected older wines evaluated by *Wine Enthusiast Magazine's* editors and other qualified tasters. On a regular basis the Buying Guide includes reports on special tastings and the wines of specific producers. Regular contributors to our Buying Guide include Senior Editor/ Tasting Director Joe Czerwinski, Assistant Tasting Director Lauren Buzzeo, Executive Editor Susan Kostrzewa, Contributing Editor Michael Schachner and Contributing Reviewer Jean Reilly in New York, European Editor Roger Voss in Bordeaux, Italian Editor Monica Lerner in Rome, Contributing Editor Steve Heimoff in Oakland and Contributing Editor Paul Gregutt in Seattle. If a wine was evaluated by a single reviewer, that taster's initials appear following the note. When no initials appear, the wine was evaluated by two or more reviewers and the score and tasting note reflect the input of all tasters.

Each review contains a score, the full name of the wine, its suggested national retail price, and a tasting note. If price cannot be confirmed, SNA (not available) will be printed. Prices are for 750-ml bottles unless otherwise indicated.

#### TASTING METHODOLOGY AND GOALS

Tastings are conducted individually or in a group setting and performed blind or in accordance with accepted industry practices. Price is not a factor in assigning scores. When possible, wines considered flawed or uncouth are retasted.

#### ABOUT THE SCORES

Ratings reflect what our editors felt about a particular wine. Beyond the rating, we encourage you to read the accompanying tasting note to learn about a wine's special characteristics.

- Classic 98–100:** The pinnacle of quality.
- Superb 94–97:** A great achievement.
- Excellent 90–93:** Highly recommended.
- Very Good 87–89:** Often good value; well recommended.
- Good 83–86:** Suitable for everyday consumption; often good value.
- Acceptable 80–82:** Can be employed in casual, less-critical circumstances.

Wines receiving a rating below 80 are not reviewed.

#### SPECIAL DESIGNATIONS

**Editors' Choice** wines are those that offer excellent quality at a price above our Best Buy range, or a wine at any price with unique qualities that merit special attention.

**Cellar Selections** are wines deemed highly collectible and/or requiring time in a temperature-controlled wine cellar to reach their maximum potential. A Cellar Selection designation does not mean that a wine must be stored to be enjoyed, but that cellaring will probably result in a more enjoyable bottle. In general, an optimum time for cellaring will be indicated.

**Best Buys** are wines that offer a high level of quality in relation to price. There are no specific guidelines or formulae for determining Best Buys, but they are generally priced at \$15 or less.

#### SUBMITTING WINES FOR REVIEW

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**90 Cobblestone 2005 Cobblestone Vineyard Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); \$69.** Clearly well-originated, to judge from the fine structure and essential purity. But it's a very tannic, closed wine, with a mouth-numbing astringency that accentuates the acidity. Even so, it's so ripe in blackberries and currants it's almost drinkable now, with a good decant. But you're best off cellaring a good 4–6 years. *Cellar Selection.* —S.H.

**90 Pali 2007 Highlands Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); \$33.** A polished, soft Cabernet blend with Malbec, Cabernet Franc and Merlot. It's particularly smooth in the mouth, with lush tannins framing blackberry, currant and cedar flavors. Drinks rich and complex now and for a few more years. —S.H.

**90 Trinchero 2007 Central Park West Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (St. Helena); \$35.** Nice and dry, with firm, hard tannins and rich flavors of blackberries, cherries and dark chocolate. The oak is pretty strong, offering a coating of caramel. Shows a full-bodied, masculine Cabernet character that needs a good decant to aerate the tannins. Should age though 2013, at least. —S.H.

**90 Wild Oak by St. Francis 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Sonoma County); \$38.** Enormously rich and ripe, with waves of blackberries, cherries, licorice, chocolate and cedary oak influences. Feels dry and lush in the mouth, but very tannic, giving a sandpapery astringency. You can drink it now with a good steak, but this Cab should develop though 2013, at least. —S.H.

**89 Kirkland Signature 2007 Signature Series Mountain Cuvee Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); \$18.** Great price for this rich wine. It shows the density and concentration of mountain fruit, and also the tannins, with bone-dry flavors of blackberries and currants as well as hints of licorice and Canadian bacon. Good now with a few hours of decanting, and should develop in the bottle through 2013 or so. *Editors' Choice.* —S.H.

**89 Magistrate 2006 Limited Production Cabernet Sauvignon (Alexander Valley); \$29.** A little extra time in the bottle has yielded a softly attractive Cabernet filled with lush flavors. It has complex tiers of raspberries, cherries and tobacco, with gentle tan-

nins and a light, spicy touch of sandalwood. Pretty and polished now. —S.H.

**89 Sanctuary 2006 Usibeli Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Rutherford); \$30.** Nothing subtle about this big, fruity, tannic wine. It's bone dry and the tannins are soft and dusty, in the Rutherford way, but definitely there. They add an astringency to the black currant, mushy plum sauce and cedar flavors. Quite good, in the manner of previous vintages, but needs time. Best after 2011. —S.H.

**88 Brookdale Vineyards 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); \$45.** Very rich and attractive, although the tannins are rather strong, and give the wine a mouth-coating astringency. But the flavors are delicious, of ripe blackberries and black currants, edged with anise, chocolate and cedar. May be too soft to age, so drink up. —S.H.

**88 Rutherford Ranch 2005 Estate Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Rutherford); \$70.** The oak is strong, giving a toasty, charcoal aroma and tannic texture, and the acids and grape tannins likewise contribute to making this wine rather aloof. Underneath are good, complex cherry and raspberry flavors, with an earthy richness approaching chocolate. Seems to have all the parts in place to age. Try around 2012. —S.H.

**88 Sojourn 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Spring Mountain); \$59.** This is a nice, likeable Cabernet made for drinking now. It shows fancy Napa tannins and ripe, sweet flavors of blackberries, red cherries, licorice and sandalwood that are intense and concentrated in the way of mountain fruit. Lovely and easy, it will develop bottle complexity over the next 2–3 years. —S.H.

**87 Brandlin 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Mount Veeder); \$85.** Even for a Mount Veeder Cab, this one's pretty tannic. It also seems very oaky, with lots of caramelized, charred wood. Somewhere underneath it all are blackberries and black currants that are sweetly ripe. Your best bet is to cellar it, but its future is uncertain given the initial irregularities. —S.H.

**87 Concannon 2007 Mother Vine Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon (Livermore Valley); \$30.** The Mother Vine Cabernet is drinking soft and easy now, with gentle

tannins framing slightly herbaceous blackberry and black cherry flavors, touched with smoky oak. It feels like a wine you want to age, although the softness suggests it won't for long. —S.H.

**87 Domaine Georg Rafael Vineyards 2006 Cabernet Sauvignon (Oak Knoll); \$45.** Young, tannic and acidic now, this is a gritty wine not offering lots of pleasure because of the toughness, despite some very rich blackberry, black currant, mineral and cedar flavors. You'll want to cellar it for four or five years. Its future beyond that is a question mark. —S.H.

**87 Domaine Georg Rafael Vineyards 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Oak Knoll); \$45.** Dry and fruity, with big blackberry, black currant and cedar flavors, wrapped into significant tannins. It's a vigorous, young Cabernet, yet quite sharp in acidity. Could surprise down the road, but it's a gamble. —S.H.

**87 Kenwood 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Sonoma County); \$18.** A good, serviceable Cabernet that has some fancy features. It's dry and rich in tannins, with subtle blackberry and black currant flavors grounded with Provençal herbs. Drink now. —S.H.

**87 Kirkland Signature 2007 Signature Series Cabernet Sauvignon (Stags Leap District); \$19.** Softly lush, a nice, fruit-forward Cabernet to drink now. Shows well-ripened blackberry and black currant flavors, finished with a touch of smoky oak. Good price for a Stags Leap Cab. —S.H.

**87 Lake Sonoma 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Alexander Valley); \$24.** Currants, black and red, are the dominant flavors of this drily elegant wine. You'll also find notes of briary blackberries and dark, unsweetened baker's chocolate. Best in the next few years before it loses fruity freshness. —S.H.

**87 Perry Creek 2007 Altitude 2401 Fair Play Farms Cabernet Sauvignon (El Dorado); \$35.** An interesting and quite good Cabernet Sauvignon for drinking now. It's soft and melted in the mouth, with rich, complex waves of blackberries, cherries, chocolate and anise, dusted with briary herbs and spices. —S.H.

**87 Titus 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); \$40.** A good Cabernet,



with pleasantly ripe blackberry, cherry and currant flavors, as well as a nice coating of sweet oak. Feels a little rugged in the mouth, with some edgy tannins. Give it a couple hours of decanting before service. —S.H.

**87 Tor Kenward 2007 Mast Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Yountville); \$75.** Tannic and gritty now, with a hard mouthfeel, and it's hard to imagine the wine will ever resolve its issues. However, it's clean and dry and intricately layered in blackberries and cedar. Give it a good decant. —S.H.

**87 Trinchero 2007 Mario's Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (St. Helena); \$50.** A bit soft and lacking in bright structure, which gives the complex blackberry, currant, dark chocolate, anise, herb and cedar flavors, good as they are, a collapsed mouthfeel. The softness seems likely to limit the wine's ageability. —S.H.

**87 Valley of the Moon 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Sonoma County); \$20.**

A good, dry Cabernet whose fruit flavors are balanced with rich tannins. Offers upfront flavors of blackberries, cherries, raspberries and cocoa. Good price, considering the elegance —S.H.

**86 C. Beck 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); \$48.** A bit jammy and simple, with fresh, primary flavors of blackberries and cherries that are almost sweet. Oak adds creamy, smoky notes. Drink now. —S.H.

**86 Ehret 2006 Cabernet Sauvignon (Knights Valley); \$34.** A bit thin on the blackberry fruit, and showing some veggie notes. Also pretty tannic. Might have seen its better days a year or so ago. —S.H.

**86 Hess 2007 Allomi Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); \$28.** Here's a gutsy, fruity Cabernet. It fills the mouth with juicy raspberry, cherry and blackberry flavors and hints of chocolate. Nothing subtle, just a dry, rich red wine for drinking now. —S.H.

**86 J. Rickards 2007 Five Sisters Blend Cabernet Sauvignon (Alexander Valley); \$34.** Despite some richly extracted blackberry and black currant flavors, this wine's tannins and acids are out of whack. They give the wine a sharp, hard mouthfeel, and it actually turns bitter instead of spicy on the finish. Ready now. —S.H.

**86 Rutherford Ranch 2005 Franklin Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Rutherford); \$75.** Way too oaky. Like drinking toothpicks, with its charred, wood flavors and oak tannins. The wine is dry and the underlying blackberry and cherry sour candy fruit is just fine, but the oak dominance makes you wonder if the wine will ever age. —S.H.

**86 Sojourn 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Howell Mountain); \$65.** From a winery whose Cabernets have struggled over the years comes this release from Napa's Howell Mountain. It's dry and tannic and very fruity in blackberries and black currants, but not particu-

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## Botanicals In Organic Balance



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larly subtle right now. Feels somewhat common despite its pedigreed appellation. Try the cellar. —S.H.

**86 Swanson 2006 Alexis Cabernet Sauvignon (Oakville); \$75.** A bit overripe, with a raisiny taste behind the black currants, and also quite dry and tannic, with a hard, mouth-locking, dusty astringency. The combination definitely strikes you as unbalanced, and not likely to age out. —S.H.

**85 Beaver Creek 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Rutherford); \$39.** Made in a leaner, drier style than many, this Cabernet's blackberry and cherry flavors have an edge of mint and tobacco. Turns quite tart on the finish. Drink now. —S.H.

**85 Beaver Creek 2007 Horne Ranch Cabernet Sauvignon (Lake County); \$39.** Good blackberry, black currant, cocoa and cedar flavors in this Cab, and it's nicely dry, with firm, finely ground tannins. Turns rather sharp on the finish, and that tartness may never go away. —S.H.

**85 Darcie Kent Vineyards 2007 Mad-den Ranch Cabernet Sauvignon (Livermore Valley); \$24.** Dry, sharp and gritty, lacking smoothness and balance in the mouth. Give it a richer texture, and the blackberry and currant flavors would be just fine, even ageable. —S.H.

**85 Niner 2007 Bootjack Ranch Cabernet Sauvignon (Paso Robles); \$28.** A bit sharp and minty, with some green tannic astringency accompanying the riper fruit flavors of blackberries and cherries. It's a good, honest wine whose texture is somewhat off. —S.H.

**85 Paoletti 2007 Bella Novello Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); \$25.** Somewhat raisiny and bitter. Tastes like press wine, with harsh, grapeskin tannins that make it feel astringently dry. Pretty good flavors, though, of blackberries and currants. Drink up. —S.H.

**85 Smith & Hook 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Central Coast); \$30.** Good and dry, with some fine blackberry and black currant flavors. But it's pretty hard in acidity and tannins, and cellaring probably won't help resolve those issues. Drink now. —S.H.

## ZINFANDEL

**93 Dutcher Crossing 2008 Bernier-Sibary Vineyard Zinfandel (Dry Creek Valley); \$39.** Quite a beautiful Zinfandel. It takes Dry Creek's briary fruit and lifts it, although the wine retains a peppery, brambly character. Blended with Petite Sirah, Carignane and Mataro (Mourvèdre), it's rich in wild raspberry, cherry, sweet cured tobacco, anise and sandalwood flavors, with a squeeze of orange essence. —S.H.

**93 Magistrate 2007 Limited Production Zinfandel (Dry Creek Valley); \$25.** Great Zinfandel, showing Dry Creek Valley at its best. The wine is dry and super-spicy, with complex, succulent wild berry, currant, licorice, bacon and pepper flavors, and just a touch of superripe raisins on the finish. Really notable for the quality of its fine tannins. *Editors' Choice.* —S.H.

**91 Side Job 2008 C5 Stefani Vineyard Zinfandel (Dry Creek Valley); \$25.** This very dry wine shows the spicy, briary flavors of Dry Creek Valley Zinfandel. The flavors are of wild black and red berries, currants, brambly nettles, pepper, Chinese 5 spice, espresso and a hint of earthy dark chocolate. Quite a fine, complex drink that wants smoky, charred meats, like barbecued ribs, pork, or a rich grilled steak. —S.H.

**90 Dane Cellars 2007 Zinfandel (Sonoma Valley); \$26.** This is a very nice, restaurant-style Zin, meaning it's dry, smoothly tannic and elegantly balanced, not one of those sweet fruit bombs. It has complex flavors of wild berries, currants, tobacco and lots of peppery spices. —S.H.

**90 Mounts 2007 Estate Grown Zinfandel (Dry Creek Valley); \$20.** A very good wine, dry and super-spicy, with the brambly fruit you want in a Dry Creek Zin. It shows robust, complex flavors of cherries and raspberries along with an exotic coating of sandalwood. Drink now. *Editors' Choice.* —S.H.

**90 Side Job 2008 Zinfandel (Sonoma County); \$15.** One sip is all it takes to love this wine, if you're a Zinfandel fan. It's bone dry, silky in texture and spicy, with brambly, briary flavors of wild forest berries, red currants, tobacco and beef jerky. Feels really rich and

savory, right through the long, peppery finish. And look at that price. *Best Buy.* —S.H.

**89 Clif Family 2007 Gary's Improv Zinfandel (Napa Valley); \$35.** Intricate flavors of blackberries, cherries, raspberries and honey-nut granola mark this deliciously dry wine, spiced with exotic cinnamon, star anise and pepper. It's very good, although it could have a firmer structure. Ready now. —S.H.

**88 Perry Creek 2007 Zinman Zinfandel (El Dorado); \$14.** A lovely Zinfandel, soft and dry, with luscious cherry, raspberry and sandalwood flavors, dusted with pepper and cocoa. Easy to drink and versatile with everything from pizza to a grilled steak. *Editors' Choice.* —S.H.

**87 Fiddletown Cellars 2008 Old Vine Zinfandel (Fiddletown); \$18.** A delightfully spicy, rich Zinfandel, packed with fruity flavors ranging from blackberries and cola through chocolate to raisins. The alcohol is high, and the wine is a bit hot, but that's part of its personality. —S.H.

**87 Perry Creek 2007 Altitude 2401 Fair Play Farms Zinfandel (El Dorado); \$25.** Delicious in briary blackberry jam, cherry pie, currant, milk chocolate, black pepper and anise flavors, with a touch of sweet oak, and the finish is totally dry. It's a little too soft in structure, but fine if you're in the mood for Zinfandel. —S.H.

**86 Darcie Kent Vineyards 2007 De Mayo Zinfandel (Livermore Valley); \$30.** Lots of briary wild blackberry, cherry and exotic spice flavors in this Zin, with cola, tobacco and mushu plum sauce complexities, and the finish is dry. Compromised by a hit of sharp acidity, but rich barbecue will help. —S.H.

**86 The Federalist 2007 Estate Grown Zinfandel (Dry Creek Valley); \$25.** A very fruity Zinfandel, rewarding in blackberry, blueberry tart and currant flavors, accented with dark chocolate, anise and pepper. Too soft, and would benefit from greater crispness, but it's a nice Zin now. —S.H.

**85 Stuart Cellars 2007 Lopez Ranch Vintners Special Select Reserve Zinfandel (Cucamonga Valley); \$30.** This is a very dry and rather bitter wine, with a raisinskin



toughness. It's not very generous in fruit, but is nuanced in its own way. Needs rich barbecue to tease out the blackberries and chocolate. —S.H.

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## SYRAH

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**93 Novy Cellars 2007 Syrah (Santa Lucia Highlands); \$27.** A tremendous Syrah that shows how the Highlands aren't just for Pinot Noir. Dry and peppery, it has big tannins and crisp acidity framing blackberry, black currant, blueberry and dark, unsweetened chocolate flavors. Impresses for richness, complexity and power. Now–2013. —S.H.

**93 Novy Cellars 2007 Simpson Vineyard Syrah (Dry Creek Valley); \$29.** Beautiful Syrah, dry, tannic and elegant, with a most pleasurable mouthfeel. Feels full-bodied and chewy, with blackberry, black currant, leather and tobacco flavors, finished in a swirl of Indian spices. Novy is really at the top of their Syrah game. —S.H.

**92 Novy Cellars 2007 Amber Ridge Vineyard Syrah (Russian River Valley); \$29.** Impresses for its dryness, big tannins and acids, and for the complexity of flavor. Offers delicious waves of blackberry tart and blueberry muffin, sprinkled with cocoa and cinnamon and a drizzle of cassis. Really a beautiful Syrah, classy and elegant. Drinks well now and through 2012. —S.H.

**92 Novy Cellars 2007 Judge Family Vineyard Syrah (Bennett Valley); \$29.** Very fine, very rich and very dry, this is a Syrah you can pull out for your best steaks. It has a peppery saltiness that will pair brilliantly with charred beef. Richness comes via ripe blackberries and cherries, as well as from sweet, smoky oak. Terrific now and through 2013. —S.H.

**90 Babcock 2009 Identity Crisis Syrah (Santa Barbara County); \$15.** Identity crisis indeed. The label says Syrah, but the wine is white. Actually, golden copper in color. It's perfectly dry and wonderfully crisp, with complex waves of sour citrus fruit candy, spice and mineral flavors. Fascinating and elusive, it's compelling. **Best Buy.** —S.H.

**90 Miraflores 2007 Méthode Ancienne Syrah (El Dorado); \$25.** This is a wonderfully soft, complex Syrah. Completely

dry, it offers waves of raspberries, red currants, mocha, licorice, sandalwood and dusty Indian spices that linger on through a long finish. A very fine, medium- to full-bodied red wine for drinking now. —S.H.

**90 Perry Creek 2007 Altitude 2401 Dark Forest Syrah (El Dorado); \$28.** A distinctive Syrah that shows great concentration in the focused blackberry, sweet leather, dark chocolate, mineral and black pepper flavors. Beyond the power, the wine is bone dry, soft in acidity and quite tannic. The end result is impressive, and ready to drink now. —S.H.

**89 Kendric 2007 Syrah (Shenandoah Valley (CA)); \$21.** A rich, dry wine, soft and velvety in tannins. It feels satisfying all the way through. Not super-big in fruit, but nuanced, offering layers of blackberries, currants, dark chocolate, herbs, leather and pepper. One of the finer Syrahs to come out of the Sierra Foothills this year. Ready now. —S.H.

**88 Ehret 2007 Syrah (Knights Valley); \$28.** Quite a good Syrah, although it's a little too soft, so open it now because it won't hold for too long. It's dry and silky smooth in the mouth, with rich, ripe blackberry, blueberry, chocolate, bacon and pepper flavors. —S.H.

**88 Mounts 2007 Estate Grown Syrah (Dry Creek Valley); \$28.** If you think you don't like Syrah, try this one. It's so pretty, so easy to drink for its soft lushness, but is also quite complex. Offers gentle waves of raspberries, cherries, licorice, Canadian bacon and pepper that finish bone dry and spicy. —S.H.

**87 Carr 2007 Morehouse Vineyard Syrah (Santa Ynez Valley); \$50.** Very tough and tannic now, and dry too, so that the ultimate impact is disagreeably harsh. That, despite a solid core of blackberries, black currants, violets, bacon and minerals. The question is one of ageability. The answer is that it's a gamble, as the wine, like the stock market, could go either way. —S.H.

**87 Fess Parker 2007 Rodney's Vineyard Syrah (Santa Barbara County); \$45.** Black pepper is the star of this bone-dry, full-bodied young wine, in both the aroma and the flavor. Below that are bold notes of black currants, plums and leather. The tannins are hard, giving it a mouth-stinging astringency.

Your best bet is to cellar it for 3–4 years, but it's somewhat risky. —S.H.

**87 Morse 2007 Estate Syrah (Amador County); \$24.** A nice Syrah, rich and soft in the mouth, that shows plenty of ripe fruit flavor without being cloying. You'll find blackberries, bacon and black pepper. —S.H.

**87 Niner 2006 Bootjack Ranch Syrah (Paso Robles); \$20.** A good wine, dry and firm in tannins, although it's a bit soft and lacking in structure. The flavors are just fine, of briary blackberry jam, sprinkled with crushed black pepper. Drink now. —S.H.

**86 Wild Oak by St. Francis 2007 Syrah (Sonoma County); \$38.** This is a jammy wine with raspberry and currant flavors, accented with pepper, anise and cocoa, with a coating of sweet oak. It's fundamentally dry, and a little simple in structure. Good now with grilled steak and chimichurri sauce. —S.H.

**85 Concannon 2007 Reserve Syrah (Livermore Valley); \$25.** A tough, gritty wine, marked by strongly astringent tannins. Underneath are fine blackberry, cherry, currant, mineral, floral and pepper flavors with hints of chocolate and cassis. But the mouthfeel is so tannic it detracts from the pleasure, nor does the wine seem ageable. —S.H.

**85 Perry Creek 2007 Syrah (El Dorado); \$17.** Good and dry, with pleasant blackberry flavors and lots of peppery spices. The texture is a bit uneven, though, with clunky tannins and some green notes. Drink now. —S.H.

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## CALIFORNIA WHITE WINES

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### SAUVIGNON BLANC

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**93 Lancaster 2009 Samantha's Estate Sauvignon Blanc (Alexander Valley); \$24.** A worthy white wine to stand beside the winery's estate red. Made from a single vineyard, it's absolutely dry and brilliantly crisp in acidity, with subtle, complex flavors of white peach, citrus fruits, minerals and white flowers. A touch of oak adds the perfect note of toast. Very fancy and upscale. **Editors' Choice.** —S.H.



**92 Brander 2009 Au Naturel Sauvignon Blanc (Santa Ynez Valley); \$32.** There's no oak on this wine, so it's hard to believe it's this rich and complex. The flavors are of citrus fruits, white peaches and tart green apples. Hard to say why it's so good, beyond some fabulous contribution from the vineyard that offers a complex minerality. Best of all is the racy acidity. Brilliant with shellfish. —S.H.

**92 Galante 2009 Estate Bottled Sauvignon Blanc (Carmel Valley); \$25.** Easily as good as the richly dramatic 2008. Galante is proving itself a serious player in the Sauvignon Blanc sweepstakes. Oak-aged, the wine is wonderfully dry and crisp, with citrus, melon and fig flavors that are entirely ripe, and finish in a swirl of peppery spice. *Editors' Choice.* —S.H.

**91 Brander 2009 Purisima Mountain Sauvignon Blanc (Santa Ynez Valley); \$25.** So pure and clean, as fine an example of Sauvignon Blanc as exists in California. Only free run juice is used, so there's no bitterness at all, just ripe, exotic flavors of limes, lemons, grapefruits, minerals and flowers. Compelling, and a very great food wine for just about anything that needs a crisp, dry white. —S.H.

**90 Dry Creek Vineyard 2009 Sauvignon Blanc (Dry Creek Valley); \$16.** Dry, dry, dry is the name of the game with this Sauvignon Blanc. It's rich in Meyer lemon, kaffir lime and pineapple flavors, with intense, zesty acidity for clean balance, and the finish is spicy and stimulating. A beautiful cocktail wine to get a fancy dinner started. *Editors' Choice.* —S.H.

**90 Mauritson 2009 Sauvignon Blanc (Dry Creek Valley); \$17.** Mauritson has been building up a pretty good track record with their unoaked Sauvignon Blanc. This '09 shows the balance of the vintage, with excellent acidity, modest alcohol and complex varietal flavors that range from citrus fruits and apples to spices and gooseberries. It's unusually good for the price. *Editors' Choice.* —S.H.

**89 Brander 2009 Sauvignon Blanc (Santa Ynez Valley); \$15.** Shows the dryness and raciness of all Brander's Sauvignon Blancs, with lovely, delicious citrus fruit, lemongrass, vanilla, honeysuckle and spice flavors. Just a delight to drink, at a great price. *Editors' Choice.* —S.H.

**89 Dry Creek Vineyard 2009 Fumé Blanc (Sonoma County); \$12.** This is a delicious, balanced Sauvignon Blanc that's the equal of many wines costing much more, which makes it a great value. It features lemon and lime flavors made richer by notes of pineapples and honeysuckle. Entirely unoaked, it's a great cocktail sipper. *Best Buy.* —S.H.

**89 Robert Pepi 2008 Sauvignon Blanc (California); \$11.** Fills an important niche in California whites, a bone-dry, tartly crisp, minerally wine that gets the mouth watering. With pleasant citrus, floral and peppery spice flavors, it's perfect as a cocktail sipper with appetizers, like puff pastries, grilled veggies, toast rounds with goat cheese. *Best Buy.* —S.H.

**88 Justin 2009 Sauvignon Blanc (Paso Robles); \$15.** Aims for the New Zealand style, and largely gets it right. It's a bone-dry, acidic wine, with a steely minerality and flavors of tart citrus fruits, like lemons, limes and grapefruits. This minimalist approach is sorely welcome in the lineup of California whites. *Editors' Choice.* —S.H.

**88 Mutt Lynch 2009 Fou Fou le Blanc Sauvignon Blanc (Central Coast); \$14.** Super-zesty in acidity, this unoaked Sauvignon Blanc also is dry and rich. It swamps the palate with lemon, lime, grapefruit, fig and green grass flavors that finish long and spicy. *Editors' Choice.* —S.H.

**88 Trinchero 2009 Mary's Vineyard Sauvignon Blanc (Calistoga); \$24.** A wonderful Sauvignon Blanc, bone dry and tartly crisp, with mouthwatering flavors of lemons, limes, grapefruits, minerals, vanilla and peppery spices. Entirely unoaked, it's a fine cocktail sipper, and great with savory little appetizers. —S.H.

**87 Babcock 2009 Estate Grown Sauvignon Blanc (Sta. Rita Hills); \$18.** Although there's no oak on this wine, it has a spicy smokiness that could come from a drop of Grenache. There are also percentages of Chardonnay and Pinot Gris that fatten Sauvignon's minerals and limes. Acidity is mouthwateringly high. This isn't a great wine, but it is a unique one, especially for Santa Rita Hills. —S.H.

**87 Darcie Kent Vineyards 2009 Rava Blackjack Vineyard Sauvignon**

**Blanc (Monterey); \$18.** Good citrus fruit flavors, along the lines of grapefruits, limes and Meyer lemons, accompanied by zesty acidity mark this bone-dry Sauvignon Blanc. It really scours the mouth clean. Very nice with puff pastry mushroom appetizers, bruschetta with goat cheese and roasted red peppers, or crudités with a garlicky sour cream dip. —S.H.

**87 Kenwood 2009 Sauvignon Blanc (Sonoma County); \$13.** Made in a wonderfully dry, crisp style, Sauvignon Blancs like this fill a much-needed niche in fruit-heavy California. It's zesty and minerally, with lemon, lime and grapefruit flavors. Beautiful as a cocktail sipper, or with the perfect roast chicken. —S.H.

**87 Line 39 2009 Sauvignon Blanc (Lake County); \$10.** The curve on this wine has been going up and up, and this '09 is their best yet. It's bone dry and savory in acids, with ultraclean citrus, mineral and white flower flavors. Just delicious as a cocktail sipper. *Best Buy.* —S.H.

**87 Six Sigma 2009 Bootleg Limited Release Sauvignon Blanc (Lake County); \$34.** Super-dry and acidically crisp, this wine has green grass, citrus and white pepper flavors. It's austere, although the lean elegance will pair well with shellfish. —S.H.

**86 Brander 2009 Mesa Verde Vineyard Sauvignon Blanc (Santa Ynez Valley); \$22.** With a green grassiness that justifies the vineyard's name, this is a New Zealand-style wine. It's bone dry and zesty in acidity, with citrus, hay and gooseberry flavors, and more than a little feline spray you'll either love or hate. —S.H.

**86 Cali 351 2008 Sauvignon Blanc (Napa Valley); \$20.** Bone dry and tartly crisp in acidity, this wine's lemongrass and grapefruit flavors are showing their age. It's just beginning to break up. Pretty good, but drink this year. —S.H.

**86 Concannon 2008 Reserve Sauvignon Blanc (Monterey County); \$18.** Nicely dry, acidic and minerally, with tart Meyer lemon, lime and pink grapefruit flavors. Suffers a bit from some green unripeness that suggests vegetable. Not too much, though, and pretty good for the price. —S.H.



**85 Ca' Momi 2009 Sauvignon Blanc (Napa Valley); \$15.** A very nice Sauvignon Blanc at a fair price. It's dry, crisply tart and citrusy, with flavors of lemons, grapefruits and limes. Leaves the palate clean and stimulated. —S.H.

**85 Little Black Dress 2009 Sauvignon Blanc (California); \$11.** A vibrantly fruity wine, with lemon, lime, pineapple and grapefruit flavors brightened with zesty acidity. It's basically dryish to off-dry, with a touch of honey on the finish. Good price for an easy cocktail sipper. —S.H.

**85 Morgan 2009 Sauvignon Blanc (Monterey); \$15.** Bone dry and tart in acidity, both of which are nice, with mouthwatering lemon, lime and grapefruit flavors. Would be better if not for some green feline notes that are almost sour. —S.H.

**85 Six Sigma 2009 Michael's Vineyard Sauvignon Blanc (Lake County); \$28.** Nicely dry and crisp, with mouthwatering citrus fruit, lemongrass, gooseberry and mineral flavors. Marred by excessively unripe feline notes, however, that bother the palate. —S.H.

**85 Wrath 2009 San Saba Vineyard Sauvignon Blanc (Monterey); \$23.** Nicely dry and crisply acidic, with a minerally scour of stone that cleans the mouth and gets the tastebuds watering. The flavors are of cool-climate lemons, lime and grapefruits. But shows a considerable note of green, feline spray that lowers the score. —S.H.

## CHARDONNAY

**96 Stonestreet 2008 Upper Barn Chardonnay (Alexander Valley); \$65.** A monster Chardonnay, massive yet balanced. Shows fantastically ripe pineapple, golden mango, lemon chiffon pie, buttered toast, crème brûlée and cinnamon spice flavors, brightened with crisp, clean acidity. Almost a food group in itself. Reserve this for your boldest, most upscale fare, like lobster. —S.H.

**95 Stonestreet 2008 Broken Road Chardonnay (Alexander Valley); \$55.** This is an intense, nervy Chardonnay, rich in acids and minerals that offer a tang to the palate. It's also dazzlingly rich, with complex fla-

vors of pineapples, honeysuckle and buttered toast. Shows extraordinary concentration throughout the long, spicy finish. —S.H.

**94 Stonestreet 2008 Lower Rim Chardonnay (Alexander Valley); \$55.** Ultrarich, an oily, unctuous wine offering tiers of pineapples, pears, limes and mangoes, enriched with sweet, smoky oak. Made in the superripe California style, yet always retains a crisp, dry elegance. —S.H.

**93 Shafer 2008 Red Shoulder Ranch Chardonnay (Carneros); \$48.** After many years of cult stardom, Shafer's Red Shoulder Ranch still rules. It performs the difficult feat of combining powerful richness with dry elegance. The pineapple, Meyer lemon and kaffir lime flavors are undergirded with a steely minerality, while oak and lees add rich tiers of interest. The 2008 is tarter than usual, making it a good foil against lobster risotto or grilled salmon with a tropical fruit salsa topping. —S.H.

**93 Stonestreet 2008 Gravel Bench Chardonnay (Alexander Valley);**

**\$55.** Quite oaky, with vanilla and caramelized meringue notes dominating, but underneath is a dry, crisp Chardonnay of enormous size. It's mineral, with a rich vein of pineapples and mangoes. Decant for a while, and don't serve too cold. —S.H.

**93 Stonestreet 2008 Red Point Chardonnay (Alexander Valley); \$55.** This very fine Chardonnay has a stony, mineral component, like a lick of cold steel. That vibrancy leads to rich pineapple and green apple purée flavors, enriched with cinnamon spices, toasty oak and creamy lees. It's a complex, elegantly dry wine that will pick up bottle nuances over the next 2–3 years. —S.H.

**92 Dierberg 2007 Chardonnay (Santa Maria Valley); \$32.** A lovely Chardonnay, bone dry and rich, that shows how well this cool Santa Barbara valley can develop the variety. With crisp acidity and a tang of minerals, the wine is citrusy and floral, with opulent notes from oak barrels and creamy lees. —S.H.



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**91 Clos La Chance 2008 Biagini Vineyard Chardonnay (Santa Cruz Mountains); \$35.** Shows a deft hand at balancing all the elements. Ripe, citrusy tropical fruits and green apples, oak, minerals, racy acidity, lees and the byproducts of malolactic fermentation all come together to produce a rich, complex, fruity young Chardonnay. Gets better as it warms in the glass. —S.H.

**91 Windsor Sonoma 2008 Chardonnay (Russian River Valley); \$20.** This is a firm, dry, minerally Chardonnay. It's not blockbuster rich, but it is clean and vibrant and elegant. The flinty flavors are enriched with notes of pineapples and green apples, while oak and lees give hints of buttered toast and sour cream. A very fine, food-friendly wine that sommeliers should be aware of. *Editors' Choice.* —S.H.

**90 Darcie Kent Vineyards 2008 DeMayo Vineyard Chardonnay (Livermore Valley); \$24.** A good, drily tart, Chablis-style Chardonnay, with crisp acidity and stony minerality. Shows interesting flavors of pineapples, tangerines, honeysuckle and cinnamon spice. —S.H.

**90 Dierberg 2008 Steel Chardonnay (Santa Maria Valley); \$32.** Made without any oak influences, this wine shows the splendors of great Santa Maria Chardonnay. It's marked by complex flavors of Meyer lemons, pineapples, orange zest and honeysuckle, and is beautifully bright in crisp acidity. Nice with fresh crab. —S.H.

**90 MacRostie 2008 Chardonnay (Sonoma Coast); \$25.** A very good, useful Chardonnay that's easy to drink, yet also quite complex. Brisk and crisp in acidity, it shows citrus mineral, green apple and floral notes, touched with smoky oak. —S.H.

**90 Molnar Family 2008 Poseidon's Vineyard Chardonnay (Carneros); \$25.** The cool vintage has given this Chardonnay a steely, minerally austerity, like Chablis. Its pedigreed origins and superior winemaking are evident in the overall balance. Dry and crisp in acidity, it's a racy wine, with stone-licked citrus, apricot and peach flavors. —S.H.

**89 Cali 351 2007 Chardonnay (Napa Valley); \$30.** This is one of the drier, steelier Chardonnays on the market. It shows fla-

vors of Meyer lemons, limes and tart white peaches, with a tantalizing acidity that makes the mouth water. Trades opulence for elegance, a nice wine for roasted salmon and sweet summer corn. —S.H.

**89 Concannon 2008 Reserve Chardonnay (Livermore Valley); \$20.** Drier and earthier than many other Chardonnays, this one is easy to drink and food friendly. It shows oak-inspired flavors of pineapples and vanilla, with a creamy, leesy texture. Nice with poached salmon with roasted new potatoes on a summer evening. —S.H.

**89 Groth 2008 Chardonnay (Napa Valley); \$29.** Shows rich, forward pineapple tart and crème brûlée flavors that are satisfying and dry. Delicious and spicy, although it's just a bit sharp. Drink now. —S.H.

**88 Francis Ford Coppola 2008 Saralee's Vineyard Reserve Chardonnay (Russian River Valley); \$25.** A pretty good Chardonnay, dry and crisp and minerally. It comes from this famous vineyard in the heart of the southern valley, and shows proper flavors of green apples and peaches, with a firm minerality and fine acidity. Not particularly rich, but interesting and complex, and a good companion to food. —S.H.

**88 Jekel 2008 Gravelstone Chardonnay (Arroyo Seco); \$13.** A clean, brisk Chardonnay made from this small, cool part of Monterey County's Salinas Valley. Shows its region's bright acidity, and also its long hangtime flavors of pineapples, peaches, green apples, limes and minerals. Nothing fancy or showy, just a really nice Chard at a fair price. *Best Buy.* —S.H.

**88 Tor Kenward 2008 Durell Vineyard Chardonnay (Russian River Valley); \$53.** Dry, tart and citrusy. Offers streamlined flavors of lemons, limes, tannic herb tea and minerals, with oak and lees adding much-needed richness. It's elegant in a Chablisian way, but trades fruity opulence for a more complex, connoisseur's austerity. Drink now, and don't overchill. —S.H.

**87 Brophy Clark 2008 Chardonnay (Santa Maria Valley); \$20.** Very bright and acidic, with the savory taste of a sour lemondrop candy. If you're sensitive to acidity

you'll find it tart. But it's deliciously layered, with tiers of buttered toast, vanilla and spice. —S.H.

**87 Carmel Road 2008 Chardonnay (Monterey County); \$18.** This is a good, sound, everyday Chardonnay. It's very dry and crisp in Central Coast acidity, with mineral-laded flavors of lemons, limes, apples and pineapples, touched with vanilla and buttered toast. —S.H.

**87 Castello di Amorosa 2008 Bien Nacido Vineyard Chardonnay (Santa Barbara County); \$38.** This is a good, dry Chardonnay, marked by brisk acidity and a steely minerality. The fruit veers toward pineapples and apricots, while oak adds notes of buttered toast and caramel. Feels like it wants to be richer than it is, but it's elegant. —S.H.

**87 Clos La Chance 2008 Liebler Vineyard Chardonnay (Santa Cruz Mountains); \$35.** Made in the popular style of ripe fruit, oak and soft creaminess. The pineapple jam, buttered popcorn and vanilla flavors are attractive and brightened by crisp acidity. —S.H.

**87 Irony 2008 Chardonnay (Napa Valley); \$13.** Clean, brisk and balanced, with good varietal flavors of pineapples, limes, peaches and exotic tropical fruits, brightened with zesty acidity. This is a good price for a classic California Chardonnay. —S.H.

**87 Rutherford Hill 2008 Chardonnay (Napa Valley); \$21.** Lean and minerally, this Chard offers lime and white peach flavors that finish bone dry and clean. It's not a rich wine, but it is very elegant, with a good scour of bracing acidity. —S.H.

**87 Villa Andretti 2009 Chardonnay (Napa Valley); \$28.** Not very Chardonnay-like, more like a Viognier or Pinot Gris with its aromatic floral, tropical fruit, citrus, melon and spice aromas and flavors. Still, it's very tasty, and dry as well, with a crisp spine of minerally acidity. —S.H.

**86 Leto 2008 Chardonnay (Carneros); \$30.** This is a dry, firmly crisp Chardonnay, with pineapple, apricot, mineral and vanilla flavors. It's somewhat simple and direct, but very clean and zesty. Nice for drinking now. —S.H.



**86 Paoletti 2008 Chardonnay (Russian River Valley); \$26.** Sweet and oaky, this Chard tastes like a vanilla and caramel cream soda, with alcohol and a squirt of pineapple essence. Defines the superripe, opulent style, without much complexity. —S.H.

**85 Dillon 2008 Barrel Fermented Chardonnay (Yountville); \$23.** Dry, crisp and austere, although it's elegant in its own way. Shows citrus, mineral and lees flavors, with some creamy, buttered toast notes. —S.H.

**85 Gnarly Head 2009 Chardonnay (California); \$11.** Good and dry, with a firm scour of acidity and an earthiness to the pineapples and pears. This is a fine everyday Chardonnay at a fair price. —S.H.

**85 Nickel & Nickel 2008 Searby Vineyard Chardonnay (Russian River Valley); \$45.** Pretty severe, an acidic, raspingly dry wine and even a tannic one. Shows an astringency rare in Chardonnay, even though there are some good pineapple and buttered toast flavors. Not an ager. —S.H.

**85 Nickel & Nickel 2008 Truchard Vineyard Chardonnay (Carneros); \$45.** One of the leanest, most severe Chardonnays out there. In its favor is extreme dryness, elegance and a refreshing minerality. But the citrus flavors are so thin, there's just not much going on, and a little oak doesn't help. Simply lacks richness. —S.H.

**85 Sonoma-Cutrer 2006 The Cutrer Chardonnay (Russian River Valley); \$35.** Released at the age of nearly four years, this wine tastes a little sweet and tired, like melted apricot jam sprinkled with vanilla and cinnamon, with dried fruit and herbal notes. Drink now before it goes further downhill. —S.H.

**85 Sonoma-Cutrer 2008 Chardonnay (Sonoma Coast); \$24.** A solid, direct Chardonnay. Doesn't offer a whole lot of complexity, but it's dry and creamy, with spicy, oak-inspired pineapple and green apple flavors. —S.H.

**85 Three Saints 2008 Chardonnay (Santa Maria Valley); \$20.** This pretty good everyday Chardonnay shows slightly sweet flavors of peaches, pineapples and mangoes

brightened with crisp acidity. You could even make a summertime wine cooler with it. —S.H.

## PINOT GRIS/GRIGIO

**91 Carr 2009 Turner Vineyard Pinot Gris (Sta. Rita Hills); \$20.** Racy in acidity, this unoaked wine was bottled early to preserve fresh fruitiness. It's clean and dry in the mouth, with fine, delicate flavors of citrus fruits, apricots, white peaches, green apples and a touch of honeysuckle and stony minerals. A brilliantly

racy wine that needs no wood to be opulent and compelling. *Editors' Choice.* —S.H.

**88 Babcock 2009 Naughty Little Hill-sides Pinot Gris (Sta. Rita Hills); \$23.** A secret of Santa Rita Hills is how kind the terroir is to Pinot Grigio AKA Pinot Gris. Babcock expresses its crisply acidic, long hangtime varietal flavors in an unoaked way, with splendid citrus and tropical fruit flavors, girded by a steely minerality. The wine, by the way, is dry, although it has a honeyed richness. —S.H.



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**88 Longoria 2009 Pinot Grigio (Santa Barbara County); \$19.** Made the way Pinot Grigio should be. Bone dry and zesty in acidity, it has citrus, mineral and floral flavors that finish with a scour of peppery spice. A brilliant cocktail sipper that will also complement savory appetizers. —S.H.

**87 Morgan 2009 R&D Franscioni Vineyard Pinot Gris (Santa Lucia Highlands); \$17.** As always with Morgan's Pinot Gris, the 2009 is bone dry and ultracrisp in acidity, with mouthwatering citrus, apricot and green apple flavors. Great as a cocktail sipper, especially with shrimp cocktail. —S.H.

**87 Murphy-Goode 2008 Pinot Grigio (California); \$12.** Clean and crisp in acidity, this polished PG features citrus fruit, pear, white flower and spice flavors. It's a racy, mouth-cleansing wine that's nice as an apéritif as the day comes to a close. —S.H.

**86 Big House 2009 The Birdman Pinot Grigio (Monterey); \$12.** Dry and zesty in mouthwatering acidity, this clean wine features upfront flavors of lemons, limes, grapefruits and oranges. It's a nice cocktail sipper at a good price. —S.H.

## AUSTRALIA

### GRENACHE

**94 R Wines 2007 Chateau Chateau Pergola Blewitt Springs Grenache (McLaren Vale); \$67.** Remarkably well balanced for a wine at nearly 16% alcohol, this is also quite fragrant and complex, boasting an array of scents ranging from slightly mushroomy, savory notes through dried flowers and baking spices. The texture is wonderfully lush and supple, while the flavors add fruit sweetness to the savory components. Long on the finish. Drink now–2015. Imported by The Grateful Palate. *Cellar Selection.* —J.C.

**93 Clarendon Hills 2007 Blewitt Springs Grenache (Clarendon); \$50.** Blewitt + Grenache + 2007 = something magical, to judge from the two offerings tasted for this report. Clarendon Hills's bottling is dense and powerful yet doesn't lose its way. Potent plum pudding and spice cake notes offer plenty of complexity and richness, without excessive weight.

Long and slightly warming on the finish. Drink now–2017. Imported by Wine Brokers Unlimited. *Editors' Choice.* —J.C.

**92 The Old Faithful 2005 Northern Exposure Grenache (McLaren Vale); \$38.** Starts off with intriguing aromas of coffee, clove and plum that segue into dark, warming flavors. It's full bodied, lush and almost creamy in texture, with supple tannins that only hint at their presence before fading into a long, licorice-tinged finish. Best now–2013. Imported by USA Wine West. *Editors' Choice.* —J.C.

**92 Yalumba 2006 Hand Picked Single Site Moppa Block Grenache (Barossa); \$70.** So supple and lush that it appears to demand early drinking, the Moppa Block Grenache also features enough spice and leather to give it the requisite complexity in its youth. Plummy fruit turns a bit chocolaty on the long finish. Imported by Negotiants USA, Inc. —J.C.

**91 Clarendon Hills 2007 Romas Grenache (Clarendon); \$75.** The rare Australian Grenache you might consider cellaring for more than a couple of years, the 2007 Romas features dark, plummy fruit accented with hints of coffee and chocolate. It's full bodied and richly textured without being overly astringent, with a long finish. Drink 2012–2020. Imported by Wine Brokers Unlimited. *Cellar Selection.* —J.C.

**91 Torbreck 2006 Les Amis Grenache (Barossa Valley); \$180.** From vines planted more than a century ago, this is dark-fruited Grenache that features hints of mint or camphor alongside ample spice. It's full bodied and supple-textured, round in the mouth without being overblown, finally finishing with a touch of alcoholic warmth. Seems ready to go now–2015. Imported by Torbreck. —J.C.

**90 Clarendon Hills 2007 Clarendon Grenache (Clarendon); \$45.** The 2007 Clarendon is in a more feminine, approachable style than Roman Bratasiuk's other 2007 Grenaches, featuring dried spices, watermelon and cherry aromas and fine—almost delicate—tannins. Cherry-berry flavors finish with hints of cinnamon and clove. Drink now–2015. Imported by Wine Brokers Unlimited. —J.C.

**90 R Wines 2007 Chateau Chateau Island Ebenezer Grenache (Barossa Valley); \$67.** Fair warning: the alcohol level on this wine reaches 18.6%, which really can't help but be felt. It does deliver an impressive array of cherry, plum, chocolate and spice complexity, just don't expect it to age gracefully given its tenuous balance. Imported by The Grateful Palate. —J.C.

**90 R Wines 2007 Marquis Philips G.G. Grenache (McLaren Vale); \$20.** Rather subdued in fruit on the nose, showing more vanilla and toast, but this really expands on the palate, delivering great fruit sweetness and nuance in a harmoniously round, supple package. Finishes long, warm and spicy at 15.5% alcohol. Imported by The Grateful Palate. *Editors' Choice.* —J.C.

**90 Rocland Estate 2008 Grenache (Barossa Valley); \$21.** Superripe fruit, befitting a hot year, suggests early consumption may be the best option for this supple, luscious wine. There's bits of spicy, leathery complexity to go with the intense black cherry fruit. Drink now–2013. Imported by Rocland Wine Imports. *Editors' Choice.* —J.C.

**89 D'Arenberg 2007 The Derelict Vineyard Grenache (McLaren Vale); \$29.** The nose of this wine features some delicately lifted floral scents, but also darker notes of brandied cherries and asphalt. Give it some breathing time to let the tarry notes fade and allow the red cherry and cinnamon red-hot flavors to emerge. Finishes long, mouthwatering and just a touch warming. Drink now–2014. Imported by Old Bridge Cellars. —J.C.

**88 Kilikanoon 2007 Prodigal Grenache (Clare Valley); \$30.** This superripe Grenache is supple and mouthfilling, coating the palate with an array of chocolate and cola richness. Some peppery, cinnamon-like aromas add a touch of nuance, but overall the impression is of slipping into an overstuffed chair that's comfortable at first but lacks the support for a long-term stay. Imported by Old Bridge Cellars. —J.C.

**88 Yalumba 2006 Hand Picked Single Site Tri-Centenary Vineyard Vine Vale Grenache (Barossa); \$70.** Tri-Centenary refers to the fact that these vines have lived in parts of three centuries, being planted prior to



1901. The 2006 isn't the most profoundly complex of recent vintages, but instead offers remarkably pure essences of cherries and berries, allied to a wonderfully silky texture that makes it awfully easy to drink. Imported by Negociants USA, Inc. —J.C.

**88 Yangarra Estate Vineyard 2006 High Sands Grenache (McLaren Vale); \$80.** A big, burly, concentrated Grenache, Yangarra's High Sands bottling seems capable of evolving nicely over the next 3–5 years, although it is supple enough to drink now. Black cherry preserves gain structure on the finish in the form of finely dusty tannins. Imported by Yangarra Estate Vineyard. —J.C.

**87 Clarendon Hills 2007 Hickinbotham Grenache (Clarendon); \$45.** The 2007 Hickinbotham features attractive scents of ground spices, leather and red cherries, but doesn't seem to have the richness and depth of CH's other Grenaches this year. Tart cherry-berry fruit fades into finely textured tannins on the finish. Drink now–2015. Imported by Wine Brokers Unlimited. —J.C.

**87 D'Arenberg 2008 The Custodian Grenache (McLaren Vale); \$19.** Hints at cedar, spice and dark fruit on the nose, then turns unexpectedly tart on the palate. The tannins are soft, leaving the acidity to provide a counterbalance to the ripe fruit. Drink now. Imported by Old Bridge Cellars. —J.C.

**87 R Wines 2008 Marquis Philips Grenache (McLaren Vale); \$18.** For all this wine's ripeness and heat (16% abv), the aromas are surprisingly delicate, offering up strawberry and raspberry fruit compote. It's full in body, with supple tannins, hints of chocolate and touches of spice and warmth on the finish. Drink now. Imported by The Grateful Palate. —J.C.

**86 R Wines 2008 Bitch Grenache (Barossa); \$12.** A decent introduction to Australian Grenache, a bit simple and one-dimensionally cherry-fruited but clean, supple and easy to drink despite plenty of body, with just a bit of warmth on the finish. Drink now. Imported by The Grateful Palate. —J.C.

## GRENACHE BLENDS

**92 Grant Burge 2005 The Holy Trinity (Barossa); \$46.** The blend is 40% Grenache, 35% Shiraz and 25% Mourvèdre, and the result is a compelling mix of dark, plummy fruit with brighter hints of raspberry, liniment and dried spices. It's full bodied and creamy in texture, finishing long and lush with hints of clove and coffee. While approachable now, this wine's track record for aging suggests it should evolve through at least 2017. Imported by Wilson Daniels Ltd. *Cellar Selection.* —J.C.

**90 D'Arenberg 2008 The Cadenzia (McLaren Vale); \$29.** Cadenzia is the term coined by McLaren Vale producers to describe their proprietary blends; this one is roughly equal proportions of Grenache, Shiraz, Mourvèdre and Tempranillo. The result is a dark-fruited wine laden with hints of cola, cedar and spice. Moderately firm in structure, with a long, slightly dusty finish; try 2012–2020. Imported by Old Bridge Cellars. —J.C.

**90 Gemtree 2007 Cadenzia Grenache-Tempranillo-Shiraz (McLaren Vale); \$20.** The twist here is the inclusion of Tempranillo in the blend, resulting in a uniformly dark, plummy wine, amply framed by toasty oak. It's full bodied and lushly textured on the palate, then firms up and adds some spice on the finish. Drink now–2017. Imported by Guardian of The Grape Imports. *Editors' Choice.* —J.C.

**90 Henschke 2007 Johann's Garden (Barossa); \$38.** The blend is 63% Grenache, 19% Mourvèdre and 18% Shiraz, with a hint of green to the otherwise dark, plummy flavors. It's supple, silky in texture, ending with touches of coffee and cedary spice. Drink now–2015. Imported by Negociants USA, Inc. —J.C.

**90 John Duval Wines 2008 Plexus (Barossa Valley); \$40.** For the past several years, Duval's Plexus has been remarkably consistent in quality. The only indication here that 2008 was a difficult vintage (because of the heat) is this wine's creamy immediacy, which suggests early consumption (now–2015). The blackberry fruit is fresh and briary, spiced with hints of cedar and vanilla; lush and long on the finish. Imported by Old Bridge Cellars. —J.C.

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**89 D'Arenberg 2007 The Ironstone Pressings (McLaren Vale); \$65.** The Ironstone Pressings features enough rough edges at this stage to think it will benefit from a few years of cellaring. The tart cherry notes are angular, the tannins a bit chunky, but tea leaf and spice notes provide ample complexity. Try in 2013. Imported by Old Bridge Cellars. —J.C.

**89 Torbreck 2006 The Steading (Barossa Valley); \$35.** The 60% Grenache shows in this wine's red-berry aromas and flavors, while the 20% Mourvèdre imparts a slightly horsey, leathery note. It's full-bodied and lushly textured, it just doesn't seem quite as harmonious at this stage as some earlier vintages. Imported by Torbreck. —J.C.

**88 Oxford Landing 2007 GSM Grenache-Shiraz-Mourvèdre (South Australia); \$8.** A remarkable value, Oxford Landing's GSM is a convincing argument in favor of blending. It offers a complex mélange of leather, spice and cherry notes, medium body and a fresh, vivacious finish. Considering it can probably be found for around \$80 per case, this would make a great everyday wine for drinking over the next year or so. Imported by Negotiants USA, Inc. **Best Buy.** —J.C.

**88 Schild Estate 2009 Old Bush Vine GMS Grenache-Mourvèdre-Shiraz (Barossa); \$15.** A soft, cuddly Grenache-based (55%) blend, Schild's GMS features red berry fruit with modest touches of cocoa and leather. It's very supple and round, easy to drink on its own. Probably best now and over the next year or so. Imported by The Australia-New Zealand Wine Connection. —J.C.

**87 Penfolds 2007 Bin 138 Grenache-Mourvèdre-Shiraz (Barossa Valley); \$27.** Full bodied and supple almost to the point of syrupiness, this interesting blend combines hints of green peppercorns with bright cherry fruit. Turns tart, dusty and angular on the finish, suggesting it may improve with a couple of years in the cellar. Drink 2012–2017. Imported by Foster's Wine Estates Americas. —J.C.

**85 Torbreck 2008 Cuvée Juveniles (Barossa Valley); \$22.** Despite the presence of Shiraz and Mataro in the blend, this shows some of Grenache's shortcomings in its straightforward, almost confected red berry aromas and flavors. It's a bold mouthful of fruit

that's a bit syrupy in texture. Imported by Torbreck. —J.C.

## SHIRAZ

**90 R Wines 2008 Marquis Philips Shiraz (McLaren Vale); \$18.** A notable value, the 2008 Marquis Philips Shiraz displays a slightly charred top note from its stay in American oak, but also a pleasant mix of boysenberry, coffee and vanilla flavors. It's creamy and supple, with a soft, mocha-tinged finish. Drink now–2012. Imported by The Grateful Palate. **Editors' Choice.** —J.C.

**90 Razor's Edge 2008 Shiraz-Grenache (McLaren Vale); \$12.** Fully ripe and verging on jammy, this 75-25 blend is nonetheless charming, with raspberry fruit cosseted by lashings of vanilla. It's round in the mouth and exceedingly supple, picking up intriguing dusty spice, cocoa and coffee notes on the finish. A notable value for drinking over the next 6–12 months. Imported by American Wine Distributors. **Best Buy.** —J.C.

**89 Fetish 2008 Playmates Shiraz - Mourvèdre (Barossa); \$22.** Leaving aside the suggestive name and packaging, this is a very soft, almost pillowy-tender 80% Shiraz blend, with a fair bit of complexity. It starts with scents of hickory, cedar and vanilla, adds plum and black cherry fruit, then hints at espresso and black olive on the finish. Drink now. Imported by American Wine Distributors. —J.C.

**89 R Wines 2007 Luchador Shiraz (South Australia); \$19.** Mixed aromas of vanilla, Christmas spices and brandied black cherries give an almost dessert-like impression, although the wine is technically dry. The texture is creamy and luxurious, and the wine is very easy to drink despite its considerable weight, balanced by a tart edge of acid on the finish. Drink now–2012. Imported by The Grateful Palate. —J.C.

**87 R Wines 2007 Boarding Pass Shiraz (South Australia); \$20.** A bit spicier than the other R Wines Shirazes, the 2007 Boarding Pass features mainly McLaren Vale fruit, offering blackberry tinged with coffee and peppery spice. Turns tart, tangy, almost a bit citrusy on the finish. Imported by The Grateful Palate. —J.C.

**86 R Wines 2007 Strong Arms Shiraz (South Australia); \$11.** On the redder, crisper side of the Shiraz spectrum, with gentle touches of spice and vanilla to accent the raspberry fruit. It's medium bodied and reasonably long on the finish. Drink now. Imported by The Grateful Palate. **Best Buy.** —J.C.

## OTHER RED WINES

**89 Kilikanoon 2008 Killerman's Run Shiraz-Grenache (Australia); \$20.** A blend of two-thirds Shiraz, one-third Grenache, Kilikanoon's entry-level blend is a soft, easygoing combination of blackberries, cola, brown sugar and cinnamon. Drink it over the next year or two. Imported by Old Bridge Cellars. —J.C.

**88 D'Arenberg 2008 d'Arrys Original Shiraz-Grenache (McLaren Vale); \$19.** Probably because of its youth, this wine comes out of the chute a little tight and rubbery; try giving it a quick decanting, or swirl it aggressively in the glass to bring out the underlying cola and blackberry aromas and flavors. Turns slightly dusty on the finish, suggesting at least a few years' worth of drinkability. Imported by Old Bridge Cellars. —J.C.

**87 R Wines 2008 Darby & Joan Cabernet Sauvignon (South Australia); \$12.** Like the D&J Chardonnay, this is a readily approachable, easy-drinking wine with good varietal character. Cassis fruit dominates, accented by slightly herbal notes suggestive of mint. The tannins are supple, adding an appropriately dusty edge to the finish. Drink now–2012. Imported by The Grateful Palate. **Best Buy.** —J.C.

## AUSTRIA

### GRÜNER VELTLINER

**96 F X Pichler 2008 M Grüner Veltliner Smaragd (Wachau); \$NA.** M stands for Monumental as in powerful, impressive. This ripe, sweet Grüner is certainly that, a late-harvest wine of impeccable purity. Figs, mango and intense spice give an exotic feel to this opulent wine. It is beautifully layered, peeling back wonderful flavors. Imported by Weygandt-Metzler. —R.V.



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**96 F X Pichler 2008 Dürnsteiner Kellerberg Grüner Veltliner Smaragd (Wachau); \$NA.** An evocative spice and caramel aroma combine with ripe yellow peach. To taste, the peach comes through strongly, while the fabulous taut structure keeps the wine tightly wound with acidity and minerality. The final taste is just off dry. Imported by Weygandt-Metzler. *Cellar Selection.* —R.V.

**96 Rudi Pichler 2008 Wösendorfer Kollmutz Reserve Grüner Veltliner (Wachau); \$97.** This is the third vintage of Rudi Pichler's Reserve from the Kollmutz Vineyard. It shows an extra richness over the already concentrated Smaragd, a powerhouse of intensity, spice, mango, oregano and lemon verbena crispness. The balance is already there, now the wine needs to mature. Imported by Winebow. *Cellar Selection.* —R.V.

**95 Prager 2009 Achleiten Stockkultur Grüner Veltliner Smaragd (Wachau); \$69.** A parcel of old vines in the Achleiten Vineyard is trained on individual posts rather than wires. Somehow this brings out enormous minerality, the steely feel to the wine suggesting long aging. Imported by Winebow. *Cellar Selection.* —R.V.

**95 Rudi Pichler 2008 Wösendorfer Hochrain Grüner Veltliner Smaragd (Wachau); \$81.** Stunningly beautiful wine, its pure fruit driven by its mineral and spice texture. This is impressive Grüner, tasting of the hard rocks and heat of the Wachau while keeping bright yellow and apple flavors. Age for 4–5 years or more. Imported by Winebow. —R.V.

**94 F X Pichler 2008 Loibner Berg Grüner Veltliner Smaragd (Wachau); \$NA.** Pepper and minerality dominate this elegant wine. It is still extraordinarily young, its structure more important than the beautiful green and white fruit flavors, crispened by pineapple acidity. It will age for many years. Imported by Weygandt-Metzler. —R.V.

**94 Prager 2009 Achleiten Grüner Veltliner Smaragd (Wachau); \$60.** Full in the mouth, packed with spice along with tight acidity, white fruit juice and a lively edge of acidity. This is an impressively rich wine that preserves the tension of Wachau Grüner. Imported by Winebow. —R.V.

**94 Rudi Pichler 2008 Wösendorfer Hochrain Grüner Veltliner Smaragd (Wachau); \$81.** Very concentrated wine, as much in freshness as richness. So the balance is just right, green fruit acidity allied to ripe yellow fruits, mango and complex spices. Age for 4–5 years. Imported by Winebow. —R.V.

**94 Rudi Pichler 2008 Wösendorfer Kollmutz Grüner Veltliner Smaragd (Wachau); \$60.** Smooth wine, its smoky aromas leading to a ripe texture of spiced peach, baked apples and a fresh asparagus intensity. The wine has weight without any loss of freshness. Age for 4–5 years. Imported by Winebow. —R.V.

**93 Alzinger 2008 Steinertal Grüner Veltliner Smaragd (Wachau); \$59.** A brilliant, fresh wine, beautifully integrated, bringing together green apple, papaya and intense acidity. The texture has spice, nutmeg and ginger to go with the taut minerality. A wine for aging. Imported by Michael Skurnik Wines. *Cellar Selection.* —R.V.

**93 Nigl 2008 Grüner Veltliner Trockenbeerenauslese (Niederösterreich); \$43.** A wonderful viscous texture underlies a wine that is beautifully balanced between sweetness and crispness. The honeyed flavors go with ripe yellow nectarines and the wine glides around the mouth. Delicious now, but it will surely age. Screwcap. Imported by Michael Skurnik Wines. —R.V.

**93 Prager 2009 Wachstum Bodenstein Grüner Veltliner Smaragd (Wachau); \$60.** From vineyards at 1500 feet, this has a cool mountain feel to it. The minerality, flint and acidity are major elements in this wonderfully crisp-textured wine, spiced with pepper and salt. Imported by Winebow. —R.V.

**93 Rainer Wess 2009 Loibenberg Grüner Veltliner (Wachau); \$35.** Powerful, creamy wine with intense spice, quince and lychee flavors, the acidity coming slowly through but never very apparent. Richness, concentration, with aging potential. Imported by Russell Herman Selection. —R.V.

**93 Schmelz 2008 Höhereck Grüner Veltliner Smaragd (Wachau); \$48.** Brilliant, fresh wine, crisp and showing rich fruit that bursts out of the glass. It has fresh-cut grass

aromas, green fruits, a hint of pepper and the brightest acidity. Imported by Blue Danube Wine Co. —R.V.

**93 Schmelz 2008 Pichl Point Grüner Veltliner Smaragd (Wachau); \$44.** Rounded, creamy style, flavors of spice, pear juice, green herbs and uplifting acidity. There is a taut mineral structure that gives the wine bite along with final acidity. Imported by Blue Danube Wine Co. —R.V.

**92 Nigl 2009 Alte Reben Grüner Veltliner (Kremstal); \$32.** An aroma that is as much light citrus as richer fruit sets the scene for this tight, mineral-driven wine. It has ripe, concentrated fruit, with definite acidity. Give it three years for the taut structure to broaden out. Screwcap. Imported by Michael Skurnik Wines. —R.V.

**92 Nikolaihof 2008 Im Weingebirge Grüner Veltliner Smaragd (Wachau); \$59.** A beautiful wine that manages to have a great panoply of rich fruits and spices along with pure green apple acidity. It is intense, but so balanced and poised. Imported by Michael Skurnik Wines. —R.V.

**92 Rainer Wess 2009 Pfaffenberg Reserve Grüner Veltliner (Kremstal); \$35.** Full, ripe wine, given great freshness from its green fruit flavors. It is textured, with a fine edginess followed by a light layer of acidity. The aftertaste is mineral, austere. Imported by Russell Herman Selection. —R.V.

**91 Felsner 2009 Alte Reben Rohrendorfer Leithen Reserve Grüner Veltliner (Kremstal); \$23.** Big and rich, very concentrated wine. It packs smooth pear, quince and green plum fruits along with a touch of spice. The acidity fits well in this delicious wine. Imported by Grape Expectations (CA). —R.V.

**91 Pichler-Krutzler 2008 Dürnsteiner Supperlin Grüner Veltliner (Wachau); \$31.** Powerful, cream-textured wine, with a dry core of spice and tight mineral acidity. It has pear and baked apple flavors, with dried apricot richness. An intense finish. Imported by Weygandt-Metzler. —R.V.

**90 Domäne Wachau 2009 Achleiten Grüner Veltliner Smaragd (Wachau); \$38.** Intensely flavored wine,



packed with both spice and acidity. The fruit is an extension of the fresh face of the wine that contrasts with weight and concentrated pepper and nutmeg flavors. Imported by Vin Divino. —R.V.

**90 Nigl 2009 Senftenberger Pellingen Privat Grüner Veltliner (Kremstal); \$43.** Despite its richness, this is so fresh, the acidity a delicious counterpoint to the rounded fruits. Soft spice and layers of pear juice give extra complexity. Screwcap. Imported by Michael Skurnik Wines. —R.V.

**89 Domäne Wachau 2009 Terrassen Grüner Veltliner Smaragd (Wachau); \$26.** While it has a rounded, rich texture, the wine also has just the right amount of freshness, allied to a pinch of spice. Yellow fruits, sprinkled with pepper, are given a firm lift of acidity. Imported by Vin Divino. —R.V.

**89 Nigl 2009 Senftenberger Piri Grüner Veltliner (Kremstal); \$25.** This bright wine bursts with crisp acidity as well as layered pear and apple fruits. It is already a delicious wine, its vivid texture a foil to the edge of spice. Screwcap. Imported by Michael Skurnik Wines. —R.V.

**89 Pichler-Krutzler 2008 Loibner Klostersatz Grüner Veltliner (Wachau); \$17.** On the fresh side, with some rich texture, this is a finely balanced wine. Smooth flavors of pear, mango and ginger go with grapefruit acidity. Imported by Weygandt-Metzler. *Editors' Choice.* —R.V.

**88 Felsner 2009 Gedersdorfer Moosburgerin Grüner Veltliner (Kremstal); \$15.** A broad, rich wine with spice, pepper and a fine, fresh acidity. This is ripe, retaining a good balance. Screwcap. Imported by Grape Expectations (CA). —R.V.

**87 Domäne Wachau 2009 Terrassen Grüner Veltliner Federspiel (Wachau); \$16.** Typical light and fresh Grüner, with an attractive burst of lemon acidity as well as a creamy texture. Delicious, crisp wine. Screwcap. Imported by Vin Divino. —R.V.

**85 Markus Huber 2008 Hugo Grüner Veltliner (Niederösterreich); \$NA.** Fresh lime and lemon aromas lead into a soft and creamy wine, with just a hint of spice and lychee. Final grapefruit acidity renders the wine as crisp

as possible. Drink now. Screwcap. Imported by Boutique Wine Collection. —R.V.

## RIESLING

**96 Prager 2009 Wachstum Bodenstein Riesling Smaragd (Wachau); \$70.** A lovely wine. Ripe Riesling held under tension, its coiled white fruits creating the crispest citrus character. The wine is just settling out on a long development, its steely edge and

intense acidity promising many years. Imported by Winebow. *Cellar Selection.* —R.V.

**95 F X Pichler 2008 Loibner Berg Riesling Smaragd (Wachau); \$NA.** A rich, smooth wine, creamy-textured yet with points of fresh zest, green plums and spiced apricots. This is a beautifully balanced wine, just a touch of honey showing with a lively freshness. The finish just lasts forever. Imported by Weygandt-Metzler. —R.V.



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**95 Prager 2009 Achleiten Riesling Smaragd (Wachau); \$65.** Ripe peaches and mango fruit join a crisp layer of grapefruit freshness. A delicately balanced Riesling that shows just an edge of sweetness along with a vibrant mineral texture. Like all Prager wines, this needs aging. Imported by Winebow. —R.V.

**94 Alzinger 2008 Steinertal Riesling Smaragd (Wachau); \$62.** So steely and mineral-driven, this is an intensely crisp wine, with concentrated fresh apple flavors over a texture that shows pear skins and orange zest. Acidity and spice combine on the finish. Imported by Michael Skurnik Wines. —R.V.

**94 F X Pichler 2008 Loibner Steinertal Riesling Smaragd (Wachau); \$NA.** Taut wine, walking on a knife edge of crisp acidity, bright fruit and a complex structure that comes from the stone of the vineyard and steely Riesling character. The wine is freshened by tangerine zest and hints of currants. Age for many years. Imported by Weygandt-Metzler. —R.V.

**94 Nikolaihof 2008 Vom Stein Riesling Smaragd (Wachau); \$62.** Like many Nikolaihof wines, this one needs aging. It is beautifully textured, very perfumed with white currants and wildflower flavors followed by bright, steely acidity. Give this at least five years. Imported by Michael Skurnik Wines. *Cellar Selection.* —R.V.

**94 Prager 2009 Klaus Riesling Smaragd (Wachau); \$77.** On the soft side, with some residual sugar, this is initially a gentle Riesling. Slowly it reveals its minerality, which pushes into the juicy peach and apricot flavors and brings its own salt and flint texture. It is so elegant yet so powerful. Imported by Winebow. —R.V.

**94 Rainer Wess 2009 Reserve Riesling (Wachau); \$49.** Intense concentration, the wine powers across the palate, its texture packed with broad white and yellow fruit flavors as well as beautiful acidity. Age for 3–4 years. Imported by Russell Herman Selection. *Cellar Selection.* —R.V.

**94 Schmelz 2008 Dürnsteiner Freiheit Riesling Smaragd (Wachau); \$56.** Crisp, steely, deliciously perfumed wine. It shows a tight mineral character balanced by the fresh

white currant and grapefruit flavors. The acidity and structure are important, promising good aging. Imported by Blue Danube Wine Co. *Cellar Selection.* —R.V.

**93 Josef Jamek 2008 Ried Klaus Riesling Smaragd (Wachau); \$NA.** Perfumed, sweet aromas, but the palate is bone dry. The wine is tight, with a vibrant acidity, citrus, white currants and peach. A steely wine that needs a few years to really blossom. —R.V.

**93 Nigl 2009 Senftenberger Pellingen Privat Riesling (Kremstal); \$56.** Powerful, rich Riesling, its natural acidity rounded out with ripe white fruit flavors, a touch of vanilla and spice as well as pure crisp steeliness. A wine for aging over 6–7 years. Screwcap. Imported by Michael Skurnik Wines. *Cellar Selection.* —R.V.

**93 Rainer Wess 2009 Pfaffenberger Reserve Riesling (Kremstal); \$35.** Elegantly perfumed wine, its steely acidity sheathed in bright white currant and green apple crispness. This is an infant, needing many years to develop, although it is already beautifully balanced. Imported by Russell Herman Selection. *Cellar Selection.* —R.V.

**92 Domäne Wachau 2009 Singerriedel Riesling Smaragd (Wachau); \$46.** Singerriedel is at the western end of the Wachau; it's normally relatively cool, although not in 2009 as shown by this delicious, rich wine. The fruit is bright and lively, the only hint of richness being the spicy edge to the final flavor. Imported by Vin Divino. —R.V.

**92 Domäne Wachau 2009 Kellerberg Riesling Trockenbeerenauslese (Wachau); \$60.** Classic honey and lemon flavors are so fresh despite the liquorous texture that this is like drinking an elixir. The botrytis dryness is still developing and now the wine shows the most wonderful primary fruit flavor. Imported by Vin Divino. —R.V.

**92 Rainer Wess 2009 Riesling Trockenbeerenauslese (Wachau); \$42.** The balance between rich sweetness and the purest acidity is on a tightrope, with honey pierced by crisp citrus and peach flavors. A fine and pure summation of the beauty of botrytised Riesling. Imported by Russell Herman Selection. —R.V.

**92 Rudi Pichler 2008 Weissenkirchen Achleiten Riesling Federspiel (Wachau); \$43.** This is great Federspiel, the lightest and freshest style from the Wachau. It has a bone-dry steel line that cuts through the crisp green fruits and pure apple juice vivacity. It could be aged, but is delicious now. Imported by Winebow. —R.V.

**91 Domäne Wachau 2009 Achleiten Riesling Smaragd (Wachau); \$46.** A rich style of wine, with a smooth and velvet texture that brings out a creamy character. There is freshness from green apple and peach juice flavors, the acidity a great counterpoint to the ripe fruits. Imported by Vin Divino. —R.V.

**91 Nikolaihof 2006 Steinerhund Reserve Riesling (Wachau); \$76.** Broadening out into a sophisticated wine, this has spices, almonds and generous acidity to go with pure apples and a lovely, elegant texture. Imported by Michael Skurnik Wines. —R.V.

**91 Rudi Pichler 2008 Wösendorfer Kirchweg Riesling Smaragd (Wachau); \$69.** Pineapple and orange zest start this compelling wine. It has great tight acidity, as crisp as possible, with a yellow mineral structure that has extreme youth. Imported by Winebow. —R.V.

**90 Nigl 2009 Hochäcker Riesling (Kremstal); \$52.** Riesling at 14% alcohol is almost too much, although Martin Nigl just gets away with it, the fresh element giving balance to the super ripeness. This is a sipping wine, too intensely perfumed for food. Screwcap. Imported by Michael Skurnik Wines. —R.V.

**90 Nikolaihof 1999 Steinriesler Riesling (Wachau); \$70.** One of the library releases from Nikolaihof, this has become a light, elegant wine that walks a tightrope between freshness and mature smoke and toast flavors. Smooth almonds and spiced apples are beautifully ready to drink. Imported by Michael Skurnik Wines. —R.V.

**90 Pichler-Krutzler 2008 Dürnsteiner In der Wand Riesling (Wachau); \$23.** Richness goes with a wonderful light touch in this bright and fresh wine. It has baked apple, nutmeg flavors and smooth creamy texture, while acidity offers balanced freshness. A delicious



steely aftertaste. Imported by Weygandt-Metzler. —R.V.

**90 Rainer Wess 2009 Loibenberg Riesling (Wachau); \$35.** Fresh mineral- and steel-textured wine, with hints of crisp white peach and an intense citric component. The aftertaste is deliciously fresh. Imported by Russell Herman Selection. —R.V.

**90 Tegernseerhof 2008 Loibenberg Riesling (Wachau); \$NA.** Flint and summer hedgerow perfumes give a great introduction to this tightly crisp wine. White nectarine juice shows a light richness. The wine has sliced apple acidity, juicy fruit, the freshest aftertaste. Screwcap. Imported by KW Selection. —R.V.

**89 Domäne Wachau 2009 Terrassen Riesling Smaragd (Wachau); \$28.** A broad as well as crisp wine that has great fresh, beautifully polished ripe pear fruit, lightly nutty in character. Imported by Vin Divino. —R.V.

**89 Felsner 2009 Rohrendorfer Gebling Riesling (Kremstal); \$23.** Very mineral in character, this is an elegant and crisp wine. The perfumes are a vivid balance to the fresh green fruits, with a light layer of acidity. Screwcap. Imported by Grape Expectations (CA). —R.V.

**88 Domäne Wachau 2009 Terrassen Riesling Federspiel (Wachau); \$19.** Attractive creamed apple aromas lead to a vividly fresh wine, packed with bright fruits, with a cool, steely edge. Delicious, crisp wine. Screwcap. Imported by Vin Divino. *Editors' Choice.* —R.V.

## OTHER WHITE WINES

**93 Rudi Pichler 2008 Wösendorfer Kollmutz Weissburgunder Smaragd (Wachau); \$43.** Weissburgunder (Pinot Blanc) is rare in the Wachau. In the hands of Rudi Pichler, you find a wine that tastes of the apricots for which the Wachau is also famous. This is delicious wine, rounded and ripe, packed with luscious fruit and acidity. Imported by Winebow. —R.V.

**93 Tegernseerhof 2008 Weissenkirchner Zwerithaler (Wachau); \$35.** The first release of this field blend from the Zwerithaler vineyard. It gives spice, smooth acidity, fashioned

by an explosion of pineapple, tarragon and orange zest, all giving delicious freshness. Age for five years or more. Screwcap. Imported by KW Selection. *Editors' Choice.* —R.V.

## ALSACE

### GEWÜRZTRAMINER

**94 Domaine Zind-Humbrecht 2007 Gueberschwihr Goldert Grand Cru**

**Gewürztraminer (Alsace); \$84.** The Zind-Humbrecht Goldert has everything you have a right to expect from the exotic Gewürztraminer grape: it's packed with loads of Asian spices, dried fruit and honey flavor and it offers up intense scents of lychee and pear that jump right out of the glass. An exceptional level of concentration allows this wine to carry its 15% alcohol, though the finish is a bit warm. Try with Thai fare. Imported by The Sorting Table. *Editors' Choice.* —J.R.

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**93** **Domaine Zind-Humbrecht 2007 Hunawühr Clos Windsbuhl Gewürztraminer (Alsace); \$96.** The Clos Windsbuhl Gewürztraminer is a noticeably sweet wine with a decadent texture and penetrating notes of caramel, lychee and poached apricots. The palate is intense and concentrated, framed by flavors of candied apple and Indian spices while a finish of white pepper and honey seems to go on and on. Serve with foie gras for a transporting experience. Imported by The Sorting Table. —J.R.

**93** **Domaine Zind-Humbrecht 2007 Herrenweg De Turckheim Gewürztraminer (Alsace); \$55.** Decadently rich and slightly alcoholic, this is a wine for a moment of self-indulgence. There's loads of spicy intensity and a smoky undertone that creates a sense of mystery plus a lush finish of crushed flowers and quince paste that caps off the impression of intrigue. Try with cured meats. Imported by The Sorting Table. —J.R.

**93** **Domaine Zind-Humbrecht 2007 Clos Saint Urbain Grand Cru Rangen De Thann Gewürztraminer (Alsace); \$116.** Exotic and opulent, with Kashmiri spices and mango upfront, sliding into a palate of white pepper and peach shot through with mineral notes while the medium, honey-inflected finish is cut short by the high alcohol. There's a good bit of residual sugar here, bringing sushi and other Asian fare to mind. Imported by The Sorting Table. —J.R.

**92** **Domaines Schlumberger 2007 Cuvée Anne Sélection des Grains Nobles Gewürztraminer (Alsace); \$82.** While most varietal character is gone, this wine does show an explosion of ripe, honeyed sweetness, with a rich, liquorous texture. There is spice, bergamot, dried apricot in a smooth and opulent coating. Imported by Maisons Marques & Domaines USA. —R.V.

**91** **Château d'Orschwihr 2008 Bollenberg Gewürztraminer (Alsace); \$20.** Sweet and perfumed, but with a sense of proportion despite its alcohol. It has fine ripe fruits, star fruit and mango prominent, while the acidity keeps the exuberance in check. The final flavor brings in fresh white fruits. For aging 4–5 years. Imported by Fine Vines. —R.V.

**91** **Domaine Zind-Humbrecht 2007 Gueberschwihr Gewürztraminer (Alsace); \$48.** Pretty and delicately spicy, with notes of dried fruit and Asian pear. There's a core of bright acidity here, noticeable despite the high level of residual sugar, that makes for a refreshing finish. A great choice for Dim Sum. Imported by The Sorting Table. —J.R.

**91** **Domaines Schlumberger 2007 Cuvée Christine Vendanges Tardives Gewürztraminer (Alsace); \$73.** Rich, sweet, flowery and deliciously blowsy, with spice, ginger, lychees and melons. The wine is a powerhouse of richness, the acidity a sideshow. Ready to drink now. Imported by Maisons Marques & Domaines USA. —R.V.

**91** **Gustave Lorentz 2006 Altenberg de Bergheim Grand Cru Vieilles Vignes Gewürztraminer (Alsace); \$50.** Perfumed wine, sweet, exuding superripe fruits, lychee and mango with yellow nectarine acidity. The wine is very rich, a potpourri of exotic flavors and final spice. Imported by Quintessential Wines. —R.V.

**90** **Domaine Zind-Humbrecht 2007 Turckheim Heimbouurg Gewürztraminer (Alsace); \$65.** An understated choice for those who wish Gewürztraminer were a more subtle wine. The nose is a bit shy with a delicate floral tone, though the palate has good flavor intensity with punchy notes of Chinese spices and honeycomb resting on a texture that is lazy, soft and a bit sweet. Try on its own after dinner. Imported by The Sorting Table. —J.R.

**90** **Domaine Zind-Humbrecht 2007 Turckheim Gewürztraminer (Alsace); \$48.** A good value in the world of Zind-Humbrecht wines, this off-dry Gewürztraminer is super-concentrated, with a silky texture and flavors of lychees and cling peaches. A nice white cherry accent kicks in on the medium finish. Try with Thai fare. Imported by The Sorting Table. —J.R.

**89** **Domaine Eugène Meyer 2008 Gewürztraminer (Alsace); \$22.** Biodynamic since 1969, François Meyer's wines show great purity of fruit. This Gewürztraminer has balanced spice, mango and lychee flavor, structured into shape by a good touch of pear juice acidity. Imported by Chartrand Imports. —R.V.

**89** **Domaine Zind-Humbrecht 2007 Wintzenheim Hengst Grand Cru Gewürztraminer (Alsace); \$110.** This is undeniably a concentrated wine offering a complex set of very appealing aromas and flavors (singed grapefruit peel, honey, caramel). However, it is a bit out of balance at 15.5% alcohol and finishes shorter than one has a right to expect in this triple-digit price range. It's starting to show some development and will probably not improve, so best to drink up soon. Imported by The Sorting Table. —J.R.

**88** **Helfrich 2007 Steinklotz Grand Cru Gewürztraminer (Alsace); \$25.** Exotic perfumes and fruits dominate this wine. Its flavors are all about perfumes, a texture that only hints at minerality. No question about the variety here. Imported by Underdog Wine Merchants. —R.V.

**87** **Domaine Specht 2008 Gewürztraminer (Alsace); \$17.** A broad swathe of lychee gives the wine a perfumed send-off. It is ripe, full in the mouth, with melon, white chocolate and a good amount of acidity. Imported by Global Quality Import. —R.V.

**87** **Hugel 2008 Gewürztraminer (Alsace); \$24.** A great representative of its type, the Hugel 2008 Gewürztraminer is elegant and fresh, with scents of carnations and rose petals on the nose followed by peach and spice cake in the mouth. A finish of hothouse flowers gives this a touch of class. Drink now. Imported by Frederick Wildman & Sons, Ltd. —J.R.

**87** **Jean-Baptiste Adam 2007 Kaefferkopf Vieilles Vignes Grand Cru Gewürztraminer (Alsace); \$55.** An attractive package, with an opening act of smoked tea and exotic nuts followed by an off-dry palate of cinnamon and clove. The finish is fairly long and nicely accented with tropical fruit though it turns just a touch bitter at the end. Drink now. Imported by Winebow. —J.R.

**86** **Cave de Beblenheim 2009 Baron de Hoen Gewürztraminer (Alsace); \$15.** The spice is soft, giving the wine a dry edge of pepper and ginger cookies. The acidity shows enough to give the wine some crispness. Screwcap. Imported by The Other Wine & Spirits. —R.V.



**85 Helfrich 2009 Gewürztraminer (Alsace); \$15.** Classic spice and lychee aromas lead to a wine that is medium sweet, attractive but one-dimensional. It has perfumed, candy shop flavors, almost exaggerated. Screwcap. Imported by Underdog Wine Merchants. —R.V.

## PINOT BLANC

**88 Domaine Zinck 2009 Pinot Blanc (Alsace); \$13.** Congratulations to the Zincks on their back label with graphic details (rare in Alsace) of the sweetness of this smooth but dry Pinot Blanc. The wine has creamed apple and almond flavors and attractive acidity. Screwcap. Imported by HB Wine Merchants. **Best Buy.** —R.V.

**87 Château d'Orschwihr 2009 Bollenberg Pinot Blanc (Alsace); \$15.** Light, fresh and easy wine, with pear and green apple fruit and a deft, soft texture. Totally ready to drink. Imported by Fine Vines. —R.V.

**87 Domaine Eugène Meyer 2008 Pinot Blanc (Alsace); \$17.** With its slight vanilla aroma, this is a broad style, with ripe acidity, a fresh green fruit character, rounded by the toast edge. There is a good final crisp texture. Imported by Chartrand Imports. —R.V.

**87 Domaine Specht 2008 Pinot Blanc (Alsace); \$14.** Bright fruit freshness dominates this wine. The fruit is pure, vivid, light and crisp. The acidity is important here, driving the wine in a mineral direction. Imported by Global Quality Import. —R.V.

**87 Domaines Schlumberger 2008 Les Princes Abbés Pinot Blanc (Alsace); \$15.** Rounded and soft, with an attractive bite of fruit skin texture and lively fresh acidity. There is a touch of final minerality. Imported by Maisons Marques & Domaines USA. —R.V.

**85 Cave de Beblenheim 2009 Baron de Hoen Pinot Blanc (Alsace); \$12.** Light, soft and fresh, an easy-drinking Pinot Blanc, with pear and fresh apricot flavors. A great apéritif style, ready to drink. Screwcap. Imported by The Other Wine & Spirits. —R.V.

## PINOT GRIS

**93 Domaines Schlumberger 2006 Kessler Grand Cru Pinot Gris (Alsace); \$24.** Rich and sweet, very soft in texture, a wine that is beautifully ripe and broad. It has a dry core of toast, pepper, with raisins and a final hint of acidity. Imported by Maisons Marques & Domaines USA. —R.V.

**92 Domaine Zind-Humbrecht 2007 Wintzenheim Rotenberg Pinot**

**Gris (Alsace); \$64.** There's great mineral expression here, with aromas of wet slate underpinning top notes of nectarine and orange peel. In the mouth, the wine is intense and viscous with Thai spices and stone fruit that carry over to the long finish. Serious palate length enhances the weightiness and definition of this wine. Drink now or hold several years for even more complexity. Imported by The Sorting Table. —J.R.

**92 Domaines Schlumberger 2007 Kitterlé Grand Cru Le Brise Mollets Pinot Gris (Alsace); \$46.** Sweet and rich wine,



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preserving some exciting acidity. That makes the currant and fig flavors well in balance with a smoky character, touched by toast. A very elegant wine that also projects concentration. Imported by Maisons Marques & Domaines USA. —R.V.

**91 Château d'Orschwihr 2008 Zinnkoepfle Grand Cru Pinot Gris (Alsace); \$NA.** With its pale gold color, this is obviously a sweet wine. Raisins, bold acidity and spiced mango blend well together in a wine that is maturing well. It is good to drink now, but worth aging. *Editors' Choice.* —R.V.

**91 Domaine Zind-Humbrecht 2007 Vieilles Vignes Pinot Gris (Alsace); \$58.** An opulent, hedonistic wine, with an exotically perfumed nose of singed orange peel, clove and garam masala. The palate is intense and noticeably sweet but saved from being cloying by a core of fresh acidity. Try with a duck liver terrine. Imported by The Sorting Table. —J.R.

**89 Gustave Lorentz 2005 Altenberg de Bergheim Grand Cru Pinot Gris (Alsace); \$50.** Sweet, rich wine, powerful ripe pear and melon flavors spiced with ginger and an opulent full texture. The wine lets its perfumed character get away with itself, but it's exuberant for a moment. Imported by Quintessential Wines. —R.V.

**88 Domaine Specht 2008 Pinot Gris (Alsace); \$15.** Broad and ripe fruit, hinting at spice. There is weight, pear and peach flavors balanced by a good element of acidity. The final flavors continue the broad texture. Imported by Global Quality Import. —R.V.

**88 Domaine Zind-Humbrecht 2007 Turckheim Heimboung Pinot Gris (Alsace); \$64.** This is a starkly mineral wine, with straightforward apple aromas followed by a crisp, bright palate infused with notes of beer nuts. Finishes light and dry, with a final accent of lemon peel. Imported by The Sorting Table. —J.R.

**88 Domaines Schlumberger 2008 Les Princes Abbés Pinot Gris (Alsace); \$20.** Soft-textured wine, open to spiced pear and apricots with kiwi fruit acidity. It takes a while before the bite of pepper and the richness come through. There is weight and intensity on the finish. Imported by Maisons Marques & Domaines USA. —R.V.

**88 Helfrich 2008 Steinklotz Grand Cru Pinot Gris (Alsace); \$25.** Smoky, dried fruit-flavored wine. There is some sweetness, its ripe currant flavors boosted by a broad texture and some spice. The acidity seems to be missing. Imported by Underdog Wine Merchants. —R.V.

**88 Marc Kreydenweiss 2007 Le Moine Mœnchberg Grand Cru Pinot Gris (Alsace); \$55.** A quirky wine, but largely successful, with upfront tones of clove-spiced orange peel and baking bread followed by dried fruit notes in the mouth. The long finish is on the sweet side and winds down to a note of Asian candy. Imported by Wilson Daniels Ltd. —J.R.

**87 Gustave Lorentz 2007 Schofweg Pinot Gris (Alsace); \$30.** Rich, spicy wine, layers of pepper and soft fruits. The flavors show smoky peach and pear, with some weight behind the texture. It finishes well with a light layer of acidity. Imported by Quintessential Wines. —R.V.

**87 Marc Kreydenweiss 2007 Aux Vignes Clos Rebberg Pinot Gris (Alsace); \$51.** A very oxidative style, with unusual, though intense, flavors of straw and compost intermingled with poached pear and wet stones. The high quality of the raw material comes through on the long, caramel-apple finish. Drink now. Imported by Wilson Daniels Ltd. —J.R.

**86 Helfrich 2008 Pinot Gris (Alsace); \$15.** Soft wine, light in texture, some spice and tropical fruits. There is freshness, well integrated into an attractive, ready-to-drink wine. Screwcap. Imported by Underdog Wine Merchants. —R.V.

## RIESLING

**95 Domaine Zind-Humbrecht 2007 Wintzenheim Clos Häuserer Riesling (Alsace); \$60.** An astounding wine, the 2007 Zind Humbrecht Clos Häuserer Riesling opens with a tightly wound bouquet of petrol, gardenias and lemon skin while the dry palate is packed with dense dried fruit and pear flavor. Long, long gardenia-scented finish. Despite all the concentration, it's quite light on its feet and would pair well with Japanese cuisine. Can be drunk now (decanting recommended) but will

show its best after five-plus years in the cellar. Imported by The Sorting Table. —J.R.

**95 Domaine Zind-Humbrecht 2007 Turckheim Brand Vieilles Vignes Grand Cru Riesling (Alsace); \$106.** A real stunner; a full-bodied, ripe, luxurious expression of Riesling. There's opulent fruit here and sweetness but the impression in the mouth is dry and steely due to a laser-like undercurrent of acidity. Flavors run to petroleum and candied lemon peel, brightened up by a light cinnamon note. Long, long, long finish of applejack, butter and cream. Will benefit from decanting. Drinking well now but will improve over the next 10-plus years. Imported by The Sorting Table. —J.R.

**94 Domaines Schlumberger 2007 Kessler Grand Cru Riesling (Alsace); \$36.** With a few years' aging, this is beginning to show its almond and toast side. The fresh acidity is now melding beautifully into a soft, ripe texture with layers of spice and acidity. Certainly worth aging further. Imported by Maisons Marques & Domaines USA. *Cellar Selection.* —R.V.

**92 Domaine Zind-Humbrecht 2007 Herrenweg De Turckheim Riesling (Alsace); \$50.** Like an explosion in a flower shop, this exuberant white offers up harmonious scents of gardenias, carnations and white roses alongside lower tones of petrol and slate. It's intense, flavorful and starting to show some development. Try with classic French fish preparations. Imported by The Sorting Table. —J.R.

**92 Domaine Zind-Humbrecht 2007 Turckheim Brand Grand Cru Riesling (Alsace); \$92.** Within the world of Zind-Humbrecht Grands Crus, this is a drier example and the laser-like acidity in this Riesling will probably convince most drinkers that there isn't a drop of residual sugar left. Meanwhile, aromas of grapefruit and lime will keep the nose entertained while a lingering finish of bruised apple and dried fruit leaves an exotic impression. Drinking well now but will improve over five-plus years. Imported by The Sorting Table. —J.R.

**91 Château d'Orschwihr 2001 Kessler Grand Cru Vendanges Tardives Riesling (Alsace); \$NA.** Just assuming the wonderful flavors of mature Riesling, this wine still has hints of fresh white currants. The toast and smoke flavors are more dominant, with a core



of minerality and acidity. Rich, rather than sweet. —R.V.

**91** **Domaine Zind-Humbrecht 2007 Turckheim Heimboung Riesling (Alsace); \$60.** Classic in its approach, this slightly off-dry Riesling opens with petrol and citrus peel notes that give way to mouth-coating flavors of peach and apricot while the lemony finish goes on and on. Drinking well now but will gain depth and complexity over the next five years. Imported by The Sorting Table. —J.R.

**91** **Domaine Zind-Humbrecht 2007 Hunawihr Clos Windsbuhl Riesling (Alsace); \$92.** Complex and steely, this is a wine with a lot of energy and a solid core of acidity that carries flavors of white cherries and lime from the attack all the way through to a dry, lingering finish. Has solid length and definition. Let this one mellow a few years. Imported by The Sorting Table. —J.R.

**91** **Domaine Zind-Humbrecht 2007 Clos Saint Urbain Grand Cru Rangen De Thann Riesling (Alsace); \$110.** Seriously crisp, this is a wine for acid freaks; don't even think about serving it as an apéritif. However, with the right dish (think flavorful fish in a cream sauce), some real magic could happen. The austerity of the palate is softened a bit by easy-to-like flavors of toast, spice and citrus that follow through to the long finish. Give this one a few years in the cellar to show its best. Imported by The Sorting Table. —J.R.

**90** **Château d'Orschwihr 2009 Bollenberg Riesling (Alsace); \$18.** Steely, crisp, with a tight edge of green fruits. The structure is dominant at this stage in the development of this rapier-like wine. Age for 3–4 years. Imported by Fine Vines. —R.V.

**90** **Domaine Eugène Meyer 2008 Riesling (Alsace); \$25.** Very pure fruit, crisp, a tight mineral band over vivid flavors. Tensely structured, this has a light vanilla character, packed with fruit skins, crisp and citrus. Imported by Chartrand Imports. —R.V.

**90** **Gustave Lorentz 2005 Altenberg de Bergheim Grand Cru Vieilles Vignes Riesling (Alsace); \$50.** An invitingly perfumed wine, its fruit bursting with citrus intensity. It has bright, very textured and mineral structure offering aging potential. There is a lively,

vivid aftertaste. Imported by Quintessential Wines. —R.V.

**90** **Marc Kreydenweiss 2007 La Dame Wiebelsberg Grand Cru Vendanges Tardives Riesling (Alsace); \$103.** Kreydenweiss' unusually oxidative vinification methods are better suited to making a sweet wine such as this Vendanges Tardives, where we expect more savory flavors and less fresh fruit. The dominant notes here are caramel, cider and Asian spices, supported by a bright line of acidity that carries the flavors through to the lingering finish. Drink now. Imported by Wilson Daniels Ltd. —J.R.

**89** **Domaine Specht 2008 Mandelberg Grand Cru Riesling (Alsace); \$19.** Soft and smooth, showing almonds, a touch of toast, the fruit calm, showing slowly in the ripper texture of the wine. Acidity comes through as a final bite. Imported by Global Quality Import. —R.V.

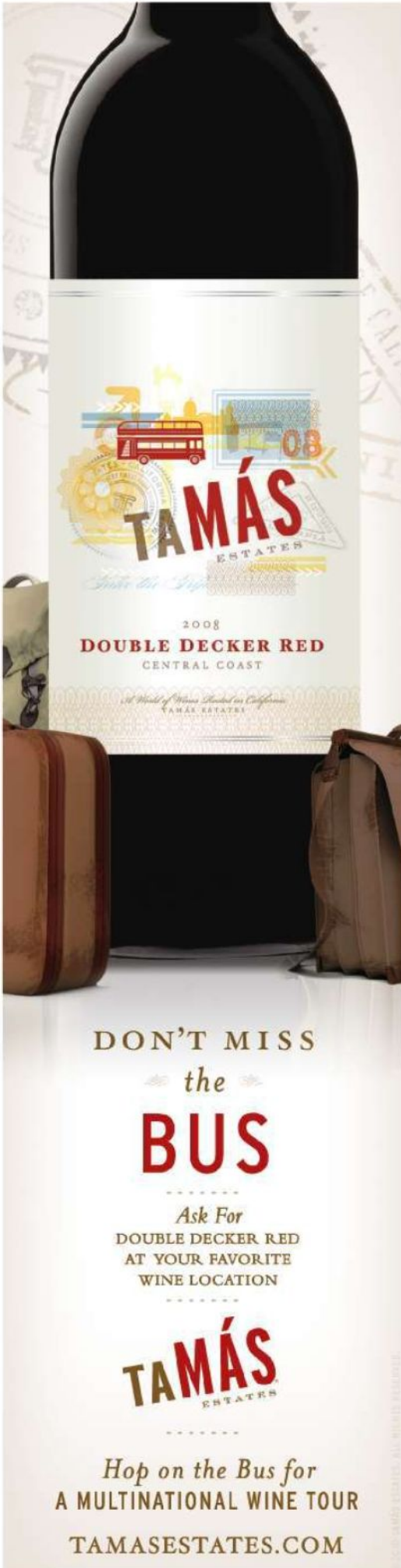
**89** **Domaines Schlumberger 2008 Les Princes Abbés Riesling (Alsace); \$20.** Finely perfumed wine, with all the right crisp, steely character of Riesling. It has bright white fruit flavors, intense initial acidity that broadens out into a fine, complex wine. Worth aging 3–4 years. Imported by Maisons Marques & Domaines USA. **Editors' Choice.** —R.V.

**89** **Domaines Schlumberger 2007 Cuvée Ernest Sélection des Grains Nobles Riesling (Alsace); \$NA.** Toffee and rich spice give this wine its concentrated flavors. It has intensity rather than weight, soft and smooth with final caramel and light acidity. Imported by Maisons Marques & Domaines USA. —R.V.

**89** **Helfrich 2007 Steinklotz Grand Cru Riesling (Alsace); \$25.** Attractively perfumed Riesling, its fresh acidity matched by white currant fruits and a tight edge of minerality. Good, crisp final brightness. Imported by Underdog Wine Merchants. —R.V.

**88** **Cave de Beblenheim 2008 Baron de Hoen Riesling (Alsace); \$12.** Lightly floral, showing a hint of minerality and pink grapefruit fruit. There is a fine apple skin edge to this bright wine. Screwcap. Imported by The Other Wine & Spirits. **Best Buy.** —R.V.

**88** **Marc Kreydenweiss 2007 Le Château Kastelberg Grand Cru**



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**Riesling (Alsace); \$105.** Another wacky Riesling from Marc Kreydenweiss, this one somehow works. There's Asian spice here and an odd collection of oxidative aromas but also undeniable concentration and good length. Serve this unusual wine by itself or with Indian fare. Imported by Wilson Daniels Ltd. —J.R.

**87 Domaine Zinck 2009 Riesling (Alsace); \$16.** Ripe and soft. There is an attractive citrus element that gives structure, with acidity coming through. Delicious now. Screwcap. Imported by HB Wine Merchants. —R.V.

**86 Gustave Lorentz 2008 Burg Riesling (Alsace); \$30.** Steely, mineral style, very crisp. The texture is bone dry, with grapefruit and lime flavors, a wine under tight tension. It has lightness and extreme freshness. Imported by Quintessential Wines. —R.V.

**86 Pierre Sparr 2007 Grand Cru Schoenenbourg Riesling (Alsace); \$40.** Crisp and dry, with a nice aromatic tension between a taffy topnote and a lemon baseline. There's decent intensity to the earthy notes in the mouth, though we could wish for a bit more length from a Grand Cru. Drink now to 2012. Imported by MROI LLC. —J.R.

**85 Helfrich 2009 Riesling (Alsace); \$15.** Crisp and freshly simple Riesling. There are attractive green fruits, good acidity and a bright perfumed aftertaste. Not for aging. Imported by Underdog Wine Merchants. —R.V.

**85 Jean-Baptiste Adam 2007 Kaefferkopf Vieilles Vignes Grand Cru Riesling (Alsace); \$55.** Opens with a classic nose of cream, citrus and spice, giving way to cotton candy, cardamom and café latte in the mouth. The crisp, dry finish of roasted nuts is attractive but doesn't really linger. Imported by Winebow. —J.R.

**85 Pierre Sparr 2007 Riesling (Alsace); \$14.** Intensely fresh wine, crisp apples and bright fruit with a light touch of pineapple juice. The acidity is mouthwatering, with a lightly perfumed edge. Screwcap. Imported by W.J. Deutsch & Sons. —R.V.

## PROVENCE

### ROSÉ WINES

**89 Domaine des Diabes 2009 Rosé (Côtes de Provence Sainte-Vic-toire); \$18.** This is a berry-scented, moderately full-bodied Provence rosé. It's ripe and round, with a soft, easy-to-drink style and a moderately long finish. Drink now. Imported by Savio Soares Selections.

**87 Bieler Père et Fils 2009 Rosé (Coteaux d'Aix-en-Provence); \$11.** This fresh and flavorful rosé is as easy to like as its gentle price tag. There's loads of youthful strawberry and peach fruit, propped up by a bright line of acidity that carries the flavors through to a medium finish. Pick this for your next warm weather gathering. Imported by Bieler Communications. **Best Buy.** —J.R.

**87 Triennes 2009 Rosé (Vin de Pays Var); \$18.** A more weighty, mineral interpretation, with upfront red fruit that transitions to an edgy, pear-inflected palate with good concentration. Signs off with a final note of crushed raspberries. This one will last through the winter but should be drunk up before the summer of 2011. Imported by The Sorting Table. —J.R.

**86 Château Routas 2009 Rouvière Rosé (Coteaux Varois); \$13.** Subtle and restrained, drawn in a more oxidative, less overtly fruity style. The palate is broad and unfocused but shows good depth of flavor and an intriguing thread of apricot. Ends with a nutty, almond note. Drink up. Imported by Mara Farrell Communications. —J.R.

**86 Commanderie de la Bargemone 2009 Rosé (Coteaux d'Aix-en-Provence); \$18.** Here's a more serious Provence rosé, with a nice mineral streak and good depth of flavor. There's red berry fruit upfront that turns a bit confected in the mouth, winding down to a taffy note on the short-to-medium finish. Perfect with a meal of grilled fish. Imported by Hand Picked Selections. —J.R.

**85 Xavier Flouret 2009 Nationale 7 Rosé (Côtes de Provence); \$18.** Pretty and fresh, with vibrant, well-defined strawberry fruit on the nose set against a backdrop of

white flowers. Turns a bit simple and fleeting in the mouth. Drink up. Imported by Cognac One, LLC. —J.R.

### RED WINES

**89 Domaine de la Sangliere 2007 Prestige (Côtes de Provence); \$28.** Here's a Provence red to take seriously for its sophisticated nose of forest floor and wet stones set against a backdrop of brambly fruit. The palate is charming, nuanced and extracted, with grippy tannins and a final lingering note of sour drops. Drink now, with some barbecued sanglière (boar), if you have some on hand. If not, spare ribs will do nicely as well. Imported by European Wine Imports. —J.R.

**88 Château Paradis 2007 Terre des Anges (Coteaux d'Aix-en-Provence); \$37.** This is an ambitious effort, with prominent sawdust and campfire notes from toasty new oak that lead to a dense palate with muscular tannins and strawberry fruit that carries over to the medium finish. Give this one a few years in the cellar to come together. Imported by Bob Bofman Selections. —J.R.

**87 Domaine Houchart 2006 Côtes de Provence; \$11.** A classic Provence red: charming, light and fresh, with pretty red fruit and straightforward flavors of plum and bramble. There's a bit of tannin here but this is a wine to drink young, before the fresh fruit fades. Try with grilled spare ribs. Imported by David Milligan Selections. —J.R.

**87 Domaine Saint Andrieu 2007 (Côtes de Provence); \$13.** Bright and woody, this Syrah-dominant red is intriguing for its tapestry of earth and mushroom flavors interwoven with mixed berry fruit. There's enough acidity in the medium, yeast-scented finish to stand up to hearty red meats. Drink up. Imported by USA Wine West. —J.R.

**86 Rimauresq 2006 Cru Classé (Côtes de Provence); \$23.** Raspberry and earth tones open this medium-weight Provence blend. There's cherry fruit and a moderate level of complexity on the palate but also a slightly funky note in the background. Tannins are forceful but polite; try with pork roast. Imported by American Wine Distributors. —J.R.



**85** **Domaine Saint Andrieu 2007 (Coteaux Varois); \$13.** Simple but charming, with uncomplicated black fruit upfront followed by cherry and garrigue in the mouth, this is a good choice for a Labor Day barbecue; the fresh acidity and soft tannins put us in mind of something in the pork or veal family. Imported by USA Wine Imports. —J.R.

## WHITE WINES

**90** **Château Paradis 2008 Terre des Anges (Coteaux d'Aix-en-Provence); \$28.** This striking Provence white opens with intense aromatics of mixed nuts and peach that set the stage for a powerful expression of crushed flowers and grass in the mouth. This is a refreshing wine, but weighty and warm; try with veal or light pork dishes. Drink now to 2011. Imported by Bob Bofman Selections. —J.R.

**88** **Domaine de la Sangliere 2008 Prestige (Côtes de Provence); \$27.** Complex and exotic, this blend of Rolle (Vermentino) and Ugni Blanc opens with papaya and almond notes that fold into a flavorful palate of cantaloupe and guava. Winds up on a bright mango tone. Drink now to 2011. Imported by European Wine Imports. —J.R.

**86** **Domaines Ott 2007 Clos Mireille Blanc de Blancs (Côtes de Provence); \$39.** This zesty Provence white is starting to show its age a bit, with faded flowers upfront and a slightly waxy texture. Nonetheless, there's enough to keep the senses entertained, with a pleasant floral edge to the pear-inflected palate and a final butter note. Drink up. Imported by Maisons Marques & Domaines USA. —J.R.

**86** **Domaines Ott 2008 Clos Mireille Blanc de Blancs (Côtes de Provence); \$39.** The nose is fresh and pretty and there's definitely a luxurious texture to the flower-accented palate. However, it lacks intensity in the mouth and a slight funkiness on the finish detracts. Drink soon. Imported by Maisons Marques & Domaines USA. —J.R.

**86** **Le Classique from the 3 Springs Vineyard 2007 Coteaux d'Aix-en-Provence; \$17.** At three years old, this wine is showing some interesting developed aromas of almond paste and petrol while the lightweight palate displays some nice butter tones. Pick this

one up soon, for it seems to be fading. Imported by OWS. —J.R.

## TUSCANY

### 2004 BRUNELLO

**96** **Altesino 2004 Riserva (Brunello di Montalcino); \$80.** This stunning wine boasts loads of character that peels off as aromatic layers of cherry, cassis, soapy wild flowers, violets, earth, cola and church incense. There's a sweet spice element of cinnamon and nutmeg and all the flavors last long on the finish. It's tempered, elegant and smooth overall. Imported by Winebow. **Cellar Selection.** —M.L.

**95** **Casanova di Neri 2004 Cerretalto (Brunello di Montalcino); \$200.** The aromas are harmonious and penetrating; the mouthfeel smooth and velvety and the overall effect is one of complexity and intensity. Cerretalto is a cru selection riserva and represents one of the most modern, fruit-forward and boldest expressions from the Montalcino territory. Imported by Dalla Terra Winery Direct. **Cellar Selection.** —M.L.

**95** **Castello Banfi 2004 Poggio all'Oro Riserva (Brunello di Montalcino); \$150.** The last time this special Riserva was produced was in 1999. Only produced in excellent vintages, the 2004 expression shows amazing concentration, balance, complexity, depth and personality. Aromas include black cherry, cola, light smoke, graphite and moist tobacco. The mouthfeel is deep, penetrating and long lasting with tight but polished tannins. Drink after 2015. Imported by Banfi Vintners. **Cellar Selection.** —M.L.

**95** **San Polino 2004 Riserva (Brunello di Montalcino); \$90.** Here's an immediately seductive Riserva from Montalcino with sweet cherry aromas backed by vanilla, cinnamon and spice. The wine is terrific, from the intensity of its aromas to the smoothness of its mouthfeel. The finish is long, supple and very polished. Imported by Premier Wine Co. **Cellar Selection.** —M.L.

**95** **Uccelliera 2004 Riserva (Brunello di Montalcino); \$112.** Uccelliera is among an elite group that represents the best of the best of Montalcino. This gorgeous wine is



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intense and generous with nice concentration and layered aromas of cherry, blackberry, spice, blackberry and plum. The mouthfeel is smooth and rich and the wine promises many happy years ahead. A Marc de Grazia selection; various American importers. **Cellar Selection.** —M.L.

**95 Valdicava 2004 Madonna del Piano Riserva (Brunello di Montalcino); \$186.** Here's a dark and well concentrated Brunello Riserva with meaty tones of smoked ham or bresaola backed by black cherry and prune. You'll get loads of leather and tobacco and the wine is bright and tart on the close with a fresh fruit finale. Excellent. Imported by Vinifera Imports. **Cellar Selection.** —M.L.

**94 Caparzo 2004 Borgo Scopeto Riserva (Brunello di Montalcino); \$97.** Soft, supple and persistent, this gorgeous Riserva Brunello offers intensity and genuine territorial characteristics. Aromas include cherry cola, spice and loads of balsam notes such as eucalyptus and menthol. It's tight and determined in the mouth and this impression is reinforced by fresh acidity and silky tannins. Imported by Vineyard Brands. —M.L.

**94 Castello Romitorio 2004 Riserva (Brunello di Montalcino); \$140.** Castello Romitorio's beautiful Riserva Brunello delivers ripe fruit notes with inky consistency and elegant mineral tones framed around a core of solid red fruit. The wine is supple and very polished with impressive persistency on the finish. Imported by Vinifera Imports. —M.L.

**94 La Fiorita 2004 Riserva (Brunello di Montalcino); \$84.** La Fiorita Riserva shows excellent intensity and generosity with full notes of blackberry, cherry, spice, cigar box and smoke. The wine is big, thick and succulent and the finish lasts many long, delicious minutes. Very nice. Imported by Chambers & Chambers. **Cellar Selection.** —M.L.

**94 Poggio Antico 2004 Riserva (Brunello di Montalcino); \$178.** This is a particularly elegant wine that emphasizes harmonious aromas of black fruit, spice and polished mineral. Poggio Antico is an excellent producer and this Riserva shows the best of Montalcino tradition. Imported by Empson (USA) Ltd. **Cellar Selection.** —M.L.

**94 Poggio Nardone 2004 Riserva (Brunello di Montalcino); \$NA.** Here's a beautiful Brunello Riserva that comes at you in full force thanks to its compelling aromas of spice, cherry, currants, mesquite wood and cola. There's an immediate and direct manner to the aromatic approach, but it's layered and complex at the same time. Imported by Dancing Bear Cellars. **Cellar Selection.** —M.L.

**93 Camigliano 2004 Riserva Gualto (Brunello di Montalcino); \$107.** This is a super modern and pleasurable Brunello Riserva with soft, sweet aromas of cherry, chocolate and vanilla bean. The texture is rich and smooth and the tannins are fine and extremely polished. Imported by Vias Imports. —M.L.

**93 Casanova di Neri 2004 Tenuta Nuova (Brunello di Montalcino); \$82.** This vineyard-designate expression from Giacomo Neri shows gorgeous depth and intensity. Aromas here include red berries, currants, anise seed, new leather, pipe tobacco and Spanish cedar. Its texture is rich, firm and ripe with berry nuances. Drink after 2017. Imported by Dalla Terra Winery Direct. **Cellar Selection.** —M.L.

**93 Citille di Sopra 2004 Riserva (Brunello di Montalcino); \$52.** Here's an intense and immediate Brunello Riserva that needs a few more years of cellar aging to soften its young tannins. There's nice balance here between fruit notes and spice and the wine is generous, rich and silky on the close. Vanilla and vibrant cherry cap off the experience. Imported by Siena Imports. **Cellar Selection.** —M.L.

**93 Conti Costanti 2004 Riserva (Brunello di Montalcino); \$138.** This is a standout Brunello Riserva thanks to the smoothness and richness of its inviting aromas. The bouquet includes elements of cherry, chocolate fudge and soft plum and prune. Nothing is out of tune and the wine is equally harmonious and tasty on the finish. Imported by Empson (USA) Ltd. —M.L.

**93 Fuligni 2004 Riserva (Brunello di Montalcino); \$140.** Compared to past vintages, this Riserva embodies a lighter, more elegant style. Aromas are delivered in a direct and vertical manner and include cherry, red currant, chocolate and shadings of exotic spice. In the mouth, this wine shows enormous intensity, but

also harmony and balance. Imported by Empson (USA) Ltd. —M.L.

**93 Il Palazzone 2004 Riserva (Brunello di Montalcino); \$140.** Il Palazzone's 2004 Riserva exhibits nicely aged aromas of dried currants, spice, leather, tar, Indian spice, pressed violets and cassis. There's excellent intensity and complexity here and the wine closes long with lingering layers of spice and smoke. Imported by Domaine Select Wine Estates. —M.L.

**93 Marchesi de' Frescobaldi 2004 Castelgiocondo Riserva Ripe al Convento (Brunello di Montalcino); \$120.** Beautifully intense and generous, this Riserva Brunello from Frescobaldi's Castelgioconda estate boasts a modern, determined style. Aromas here include black cherry, chocolate, tobacco and spice. In the mouth, this wine is rich, smooth and very persistent. Imported by Folio Fine Wine Partners. —M.L.

**93 Mocali 2004 Vigna delle Raunate Riserva (Brunello di Montalcino); \$75.** This is an excellent Riserva from Montalcino with rich notes of bright cherry, toast, coffee, tobacco and blackberry. Aged in big oak casks, the wine also shows elegance and harmony with a pristine, vibrant finish that lasts long on the palate. Imported by Michael Skurnik Wines. —M.L.

**93 Solaria 2004 Riserva 123 (Brunello di Montalcino); \$84.** Produced by vintner Patrizia Cencioni, this Brunello Riserva is plump and succulent with loads of black fruit, new leather, moist tobacco, wet earth and wild mushroom. You'll love the intensity and the mouthfeel, which is tonic but firm at the same time. Imported by Sherbrooke Cellars. —M.L.

**93 Talenti 2004 Pian di Conte Riserva (Brunello di Montalcino); \$NA.** Talenti's Riserva Brunello is a beautiful wine on all levels. There's intensity and purity here with blackberry notes that blend with mineral and light shadings of smoke and spice. The wine ends with power and determination and a very long, spicy finish. Imported by Robert Chadderdon Selections. —M.L.

**93 Tenuta di Sesta 2004 Riserva (Brunello di Montalcino); \$NA.** The bouquet opens to sophisticated aromas of dried fruit, spice, smoke, tar and licorice. This is an austere and elegant wine that should be served with



the highest quality red meat. In the mouth, it delivers complexity and elegance more than brawn or power. Imported by Monsieur Touton Selection Ltd. —M.L.

### **93 Tenuta Vitanza 2004 Riserva (Brunello di Montalcino); \$90.**

Here's a dark and expertly extracted Brunello Riserva from a beautiful family-run estate located in its own microclimate within the Montalcino denomination. The wine shows intense aromas of blackberry, prune, leather, tobacco and spice. Imported by Vintners Estate Direct Importing. —M.L.

### **92 Fattoria La Lecciaia 2004 Riserva (Brunello di Montalcino); \$60.**

Smokey layers of tar and asphalt open the nose of this dark and brooding Brunello Riserva. There are some candied and dried fruit notes here but the overall bouquet is focused on complex tertiary aromas. What sets the wine apart however is its texture: firm, drying and long lasting. Drink now or up to three years from now. Imported by Monsieur Touton Selection Ltd. —M.L.

### **92 Fattoria La Lecciaia 2004 Vigna Manapetra Riserva (Brunello di Montalcino); \$65.**

This Brunello Riserva offers impressive tones of red cherry and blackberry backed by spice and toast. There's a richly succulent or vinous nature to the wine that will surely integrate with more time in the cellar. In the mouth, this wine is bright and fresh. Imported by Monsieur Touton Selection Ltd. —M.L.

### **92 Gianni Brunelli 2004 Riserva (Brunello di Montalcino); \$105.**

This elegant wine is distinguished by mineral notes of lead pencil and slate that give backbone to broader aromas of cherry, plum, currant and prune. Oak-related layers of spice and toast add a refined touch but do not distract from the overall fruit characteristics. Imported by Acid Inc Selections. —M.L.

### **92 La Poderina 2004 Poggio Banale (Brunello di Montalcino); \$133.**

Poggio Banale offers a clean and polished nose with spice and black fruit highlights. The wine is chewy and deliciously succulent with tight tannins that make it an ideal candidate for long cellar aging. Imported by Vias Imports. —M.L.

### **92 Mocali 2004 Riserva (Brunello di Montalcino); \$60.**

Mocali's Brunello

Riserva offers a bright and buoyant bouquet of cherry, blackberry, spice, tobacco and dark chocolate. The wine is elegant, generous and balanced with a full but not overdone style. Imported by Michael Skurnik Wines. —M.L.

### **92 Padelletti 2004 Riserva (Brunello di Montalcino); \$100.**

Here is a very likeable Brunello Riserva with plush richness and intense aromas of chocolate, spice, cherry and blackberry. The wine is soft and rich and would pair perfectly with succulent steak. Imported by Uva Imports. —M.L.

### **92 Pian dell'Orino 2004 Riserva (Brunello di Montalcino); \$135.**

Barbecue smoke and mesquite wood are the most immediate aromas you will notice here. You'll also recognize background tones of black peppercorn, lead pencil and licorice. The wine delivers loads of intensity in the mouth. This is a big, thick and dense expression that is ready to drink now. Imported by Polaner Selections. —M.L.

### **92 Sesti 2004 Phenomena Riserva (Brunello di Montalcino); \$110.**

Phenomena Riserva offers huge intensity and fullness with opulent notes of black fruit, spice and tobacco. The wine wins points in the mouth where it shows lovely density and persistency. Imported by Kermit Lynch Wine Merchant. —M.L.

### **92 Tenimenti Angelini 2004 Val di Suga Vigna Spuntali (Brunello di Montalcino); \$80.**

Elegance, harmony and persistency characterize this Brunello Riserva from the Tenimenti Angelini group. Aromas include ripe berry fruit, spice, leather, tobacco and cola. Pair this wine with pheasant or game meat. The high alcohol will keep your palate clean. —M.L.

### **92 Tenuta Oliveto 2004 Riserva (Brunello di Montalcino); \$NA.**

There's a smoky, meaty element to the bouquet here that recalls smoked bacon or beef jerky. Beyond those aromas, you'll get tons of black currant, plum and prune and the wine is satisfying and extremely smooth on the finish. Imported by Ima Imports. —M.L.

### **91 Casanova di Neri 2004 (Brunello di Montalcino); \$55.**

Lighter in style and consistency than this producer's past Brunellos, this wine represents a return to Montalcino tradition. Aromas include red cherry, wet earth, white mushroom and tobacco. In the mouth, the wine is



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tight, firm and long lasting. Imported by Dalla Terra Winery Direct. —M.L.

**91 Domus Vitae 2004 Riserva (Brunello di Montalcino); \$80.** Bursting red fruit stands opposite sophisticated oak-driven aromas of spice, coffee and tobacco to create a successful aromatic union. You can taste the wood rendering with more precision in the mouth, and the texture is consequently rich and smooth. Imported by Superior Wines LLC. —M.L.

**91 La Fornace 2004 Riserva (Brunello di Montalcino); \$80.** Bright cherry and wild berry aromas are enhanced by spice and oak nuances of tobacco and leather. Count on a bright future for this Brunello Riserva as it integrates with more time in the cellar. The wine is compact, fresh and persistent in the mouth. Imported by Vignaioli. —M.L.

**91 La Fortuna 2004 Riserva (Brunello di Montalcino); \$NA.** Cherry, red apple, spice and moist tobacco emerge from the nose of this Brunello Riserva. The wine offers impressive intensity and density in the mouth and the finish is long lasting and very enjoyable. Imported by MHW, Ltd.. —M.L.

**91 La Togata 2004 Riserva (Brunello di Montalcino); \$134.** Made in limited quantities, this austere Riserva exhibits aged tones of dried blackberries and currants, exotic spice, tar, cola and powdered licorice. There's great freshness here that helps propel the wine over the palate. Imported by Panebianco. —M.L.

**91 Lazzeretti 2004 Riserva (Brunello di Montalcino); \$NA.** Buoyant and fresh with penetrating aromas of red berry, cola, licorice and natural rubber, the bouquet hits the nose in a vertical and direct manner. The wine is firm and textured in the mouth with a thick tannic coating that moves slowly over the palate. Imported by Joshua Tree Imports. —M.L.

**91 Lisini 2004 Ugolaia (Brunello di Montalcino); \$144.** This Riserva Brunello delivers instant aromas of spice, toast and leather that are wrapped seductively around a core of black fruit and plum. Those spice nuances last long in the mouth and would pair with braised meat or beef stew. The tannins are tight, so drink after 2014. Imported by Empson (USA) Ltd. —M.L.

**91 San Polo 2004 Riserva (Brunello di Montalcino); \$NA.** Ripe fruit and oak nuances emerge from the nose of this modern Brunello Riserva. Aromas include black cherry, blackberry preserves, spice and smoke. Bright fruit flavors and smooth tannins characterize the mouthfeel. Imported by Winebow. —M.L.

**91 SassodiSole 2004 Riserva (Brunello di Montalcino); \$90.** Austere and elegant with ethereal tones of Spanish cedar, cherry cola, eucalyptus and licorice, this Brunello represents some of vintage 2004's best qualities. The wine is elegant and tempered yet determined and enduring in the mouth. Pair it with pork rolled with prunes. Imported by Supreme Wines & Spirits. —M.L.

**90 Abbadia Ardenga 2004 Riserva (Brunello di Montalcino); \$NA.** Here's a subdued Riserva with a clean bouquet of aromas that faithfully reflect Sangiovese's main characteristics. You'll recognize red currants, wet earth, pipe tobacco, cola and tar. The mouthfeel is simple and fresh although it does impart long-lasting flavors of cherry and spice. Imported by Market Wine. —M.L.

**90 Fattori 2004 Riserva (Brunello di Montalcino); \$95.** This is a rich and deeply oak-driven expression of Brunello with layers of spice and smoke that sit heavy over ripe fruit aromas of plum, prune and black currant. The texture is smooth and rich and the tannins are soft. Imported by Tricana Imports. —M.L.

**90 Fattoria Scopone 2004 Riserva (Brunello di Montalcino); \$55.** Fattoria Scopone's 2004 Riserva opens with charred aromas of campfire, liquid smoke and barbecue sauce. The fresh fruit notes tend to be on the ripe side: think mature cherry and strawberry. In the mouth, however, this well-crafted wine is smooth, silky and long lasting. Imported by Siema LLC. —M.L.

**90 Fornacina 2004 Riserva (Brunello di Montalcino); \$66.** Here's a smooth and bright Brunello Riserva with beautiful fruit tones followed by delicate notes of spice and black mineral. Pair this wine with pheasant with wild rice. Imported by Villa Italia. —M.L.

**90 Il Poggione 2004 Vigna Paganelli Riserva (Brunello di Montalcino); \$96.** This Brunello Riserva offers very nice inten-

sity and smoothness in the mouth, although its aromatic bouquet is less determined. There are sweet polished tannins on the close and the wine would work with steak marinated with garlic and rosemary. Imported by Terlato Wines International. —M.L.

**90 La Colombina 2004 Riserva (Brunello di Montalcino); \$75.** This Brunello Riserva delivers subdued aromas of cherry, blackberry, tar and spice. There's a sour cherry theme in the mouth and the finish is bright and crisp. It is, however, a very food-friendly wine thanks to the acidity. Pair it with grilled meats, wild mushroom risotto or cheesy pasta. Imported by Michael Skurnik Wines. —M.L.

**90 Pinino 2004 Pinone Riserva (Brunello di Montalcino); \$62.** There's a raw, succulent element here that is reinforced by aromas of cherry and blackberry. This wine is distinguished by an intensely floral bouquet with notes of violets, lavender, incense and perfume. It's bright and tannic at this point, so give this wine a few more years of cellar aging. Imported by USA Wine Imports. —M.L.

**89 Collemattoni 2004 Vigna Fontelontano Riserva (Brunello di Montalcino); \$85.** This Brunello Riserva offers wood-driven notes of spice and smoke backed by ripe fruit and blackberry preserves. It is sweet and rich in the mouth with loads of jammy fruit on the close. Imported by Vignaioli. —M.L.

**89 Le Potazzine 2004 Riserva (Brunello di Montalcino); \$120.** Simple and straightforward aromas of red berry and mineral cap the aromatic nuances expressed in the Brunello Riserva. What the wine lacks is complexity, although it does feel rich, smooth and bright in the mouth. A Marc de Grazia selection; various American importers. —M.L.

**89 Piccini 2004 Villa al Cortile (Brunello di Montalcino); \$45.** Piccini offers a great opportunity to experience Brunello di Montalcino to those who may not already be familiar with this storied Tuscan wine. Available at a more attractive price, the wine is lean and compact with bright notes of cherry, blackberry and exotic spice. Imported by Avenir Brands, Inc. —M.L.

**88 Canneta 2004 Riserva (Brunello di Montalcino); \$NA.** This Riserva opens



with a lean, compact color and vinous aromas of forest berry and cherry. There's crisp acidity here that will pair perfectly with foods that have a fatty element such as ricotta-filled pasta or butter chicken. Imported by Orvino Imports & Distribution. —M.L.

**88 Poggio dell'Aquila 2004 Riserva (Brunello di Montalcino); \$NA.** Bright and buoyant, this Riserva Brunello offers loads of easy, fresh fruit with a point of ripe apple or white cherry. The wine is smooth and bright on the finish with fresh acidity that follows polished tannins. —M.L.

**87 Ciacci Piccolomini d'Aragona 2004 Vigna di Pianrosso Santa Caterina d'Oro Riserva (Brunello di Montalcino); \$65.** This Riserva Brunello shows sharp, brambly characteristics of forest berry and white cherry. Although the nose is prickly and awkward, the wine wins points in the mouth thanks to its softness and plushness. Imported by Indigenous Selections. —M.L.

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## 2005 BRUNELLO

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**94 Cupano 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$140.** Cupano has impressed with its entire line of Tuscan wines this year. Made with organically farmed fruit, this wine offers thick concentration, a velvety texture and bright aromas of cherry and spice. It's one of the most opulent Brunellos we've seen this vintage. Imported by Fairest Cape Beverage Co., Inc. —M.L.

**93 Altesino 2005 Montosoli (Brunello di Montalcino); \$100.** Altesino produces some of our favorite Brunello and although this vintage of Montosoli is less overt than others, the winemakers have worked hard to craft a top shelf expression from this sun-kissed territory. There's enormous depth and persistency here with aromas of black fruit, spice and cherry cola. It's smooth, rich and long lasting. Imported by Winebow. —M.L.

**93 Castello Banfi 2005 Poggio alle Mura (Brunello di Montalcino); \$85.** Castello Banfi's cru expression of Brunello, Poggio alle Mura, is a dark and delicious Brunello with a vertical aromatic delivery of blackberry, currants, plums, cola, mesquite and spice. Sweet oak flavors of vanilla spread over the palate and

the wine has impressive consistency and persistency. Imported by Banfi Vintners. —M.L.

**93 Luce della Vite 2005 Luce (Brunello di Montalcino); \$94.** After long anticipation, this Brunello finally hits the market. The wine is sure to gain enormous success: the packaging is the essence of Italian style and the wine itself shows the highest level of quality. Rich and opulent aromas of cherry, blackberry, spice and leather abound and the wine shows enormous length on the finish. Imported by Folio Fine Wine Partners. *Cellar Selection.* —M.L.

**93 Poggio Antico 2005 Altero (Brunello di Montalcino); \$110.** Aged and sophisticated, this hearty and concentrated Brunello offers ripe tones of blackberry, plum and prune along with subdued nuances of toast and exotic spice. There's great personality and dimension here with medium body and a fresh, berry-driven finish. Imported by Empson (USA) Ltd. —M.L.

**93 Tenute Silvio Nardi 2005 Vigneto Manachiara (Brunello di Montalcino); \$96.** This impressive vineyard designate Brunello delivers buoyant tones of cherry cola, mesquite and balsam notes. There's a direct and immediate nature to the aromas, followed by bright acidity and silky tannins that leave a lasting impression. This is a very beautiful wine that would pair with meats and oven-roasted pasta dishes. Imported by Kobrand. —M.L.

**93 Uccelliera 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$60.** Uccelliera makes some of the best Brunello you will find in the USA. This vintage does a great job of expressing the sun-drenched territory of Montalcino. Cherry and spice round off the bouquet and the mouthfeel is characterized by immense smoothness and richness. A Marc de Grazia selection; various American importers. —M.L.

**92 Argiano 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$51.** From one of the most beautiful and historic estates in Montalcino, Argiano's Brunello is redolent of cherry, cassis, exotic spice, smoke and very tame, delicate oak notes of toasted vanilla. The wine is bright and polished with firm tannins and some sour cherry nuances on the close. Imported by Vias Imports. —M.L.

**92 Casanova di Neri 2005 Tenuta Nuova (Brunello di Montalcino); \$75.** Beyond the plump notes of cherry and blackberry there's an added touch of clove, cardamom and rosemary sprig that sets this wine apart. The mouthfeel is rich and textured and because the tannins still need to soften, we recommend you put this bottle down in your cellar for a few more years. Imported by Dalla Terra Winery Direct. —M.L.

**92 Col di Lana di Giovanna Neri 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$55.** Giovanna Neri's Brunello sports sweet and enticing notes of cherry liqueur, vanilla and soft shades of cinnamon spice. The wine is opulent and richly concentrated with sweet but firm tannins. Pair this wine with steak in green peppercorn sauce. Imported by Vignaioli. —M.L.

**92 Il Cocco 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$46.** The Bindi family of Montalcino has crafted a fine Brunello with excellent personality and dimension. You'll get aromas of black cherry, tart cassis, smoke, exotic spice and cola. It's marked by elegance, balance and a full, generous feel in the mouth. Imported by Fourcade & Hecht Wine Selections. —M.L.

**92 Le Chiuse 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$80.** This beautiful wine opens with impressive intensity and elegance. Aromas recall wild raspberry, cherry, cassis, cola and subtle spice shadings. Thanks to the silky nature of its tannins, you could pair this wine with lean meats like game hen or rabbit. Imported by Frederick Wildman & Sons, Ltd. —M.L.

**92 Marchesi de' Frescobaldi 2005 Castelgiocondo (Brunello di Montalcino); \$70.** From the historic Frescobaldi family that has been making wine since the 1300s, this concentrated and rich Brunello delivers a modern touch to a territory steeped in tradition. Aromas here include plump cherry, blackberry and cassis and all that fruit is supported by spice and light toast. Drink after 2012. Imported by Folio Fine Wine Partners. —M.L.

**92 Mastrojanni 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$50.** We are impressed with what the Illy brothers (of the Italian coffee dynasty) have done with this historic brand from Montalcino. The wine shows personality and distinction thanks to its aromas of wild cherries, cassis, light smoke and Spanish cedar. There's bright



acidity and elegance here. Imported by Selected Estates of Europe Ltd. **Editors' Choice.** —M.L.

**92 Mocali 2005 Vigna delle Raunate (Brunello di Montalcino); \$55.** Mocali boasts a consistent record of top-notch Brunellos year after year. This expression delivers meaty tones of smoked bacon backed by mature cherry and raspberry. The concentration and density is excellent (especially for this weaker vintage) and the firm tannins need two or three more years of cellar aging to soften. Imported by Michael Skurnik Wines. —M.L.

**92 Padelletti 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$40.** Vintner Claudia Padelletti has crafted a lovely Brunello with bright fruit nuances and mineral tones that lend a polished, dry feel. In the mouth, the wine offers thickness and length. Drink after 2012. Imported by Uva Imports. **Editors' Choice.** —M.L.

**92 Poggio Antico 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$96.** This estate in Montalcino is a favorite, thanks to its consistent production of seductive and charming wines. Here's a Brunello that shows territorial characteristics and careful workmanship with pristine aromas of spice, cherry, blackberry and leather. Imported by Empson (USA) Ltd. —M.L.

**92 Siro Pacenti 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$70.** Attractive aromas of black fruit, plum, coffee and cola emerge elegantly from the nose of this solid Brunello di Montalcino. Siro Pacenti is one of the area's most historic estates and this expression offers endurance, persistency and silky tannins. Imported by Michael Skurnik Wines. —M.L.

**92 Tenute Silvio Nardi 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$55.** Tenute Silvio Nardi's Brunello delivers a plump, ripe quality that emphasizes the wine's naturally fruity and succulent personality. Aromas recall mature cherry, leather, pipe tobacco and blackberry. The mouthfeel is rich, polished and there's a touch of bright acidity on the close. Imported by Kobrand. —M.L.

**91 Altesino 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$50.** Altesino's base Brunello presents a tonic, ruby color with pristine aromas of wild berry, blue flower, earth and ground clove. You'll like the brightness and determination the

wine shows in the mouth as it spreads clean over your palate. Imported by Winebow. —M.L.

**91 Caparzo 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$45.** Clean and elegant with polished tannins and a silky texture. Caparzo makes some of the nicest Brunello you will find in the USA. This vintage is characterized by bright berry tones and a lean but elegant feel in the mouth. Imported by Vineyard Brands. —M.L.

**91 Casanova di Neri 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$55.** Giacomo Neri has seen his share of the media spotlight lately, but this honest base Brunello shows loads of fruit characteristics followed by power and persistency. You'll recognize cherry, blackberry and spice and the overall delivery emphasizes pleasure and drinkability. You could serve it now or wait three or four more years. Imported by Dalla Terra Winery Direct. —M.L.

**91 Da Vinci 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$70.** Da Vinci delivers a bright and vibrant Brunello with distinctive notes of church incense and Christmas spice. There are loads of cherry nuances as well as some sweet vanilla tones. It imparts a smooth, silky feel with a long, fruit-driven finish. Imported by E & J Gallo. —M.L.

**91 Fattoria La Lecciaia 2005 Vigna Manapetra (Brunello di Montalcino); \$55.** Here's an elegant and focused expression from Montalcino with tight aromas of blackberry, cola, anise seed and polished black stone. The mouthfeel is silky and smooth. Pair this wine with rabbit stew with carrots and potatoes. Imported by Monsieur Touton Selection Ltd. —M.L.

**91 Fornacina 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$55.** Vintner Simone Biliorsi has crafted an opulent expression of Brunello with sweet aromas of cherry, vanilla and spice. There's a pretty, smoothing quality to this wine that is underscored by the silky quality of the tannins and the long persistency of flavors. Imported by Villa Italia. —M.L.

**91 Fuligni 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$75.** Here's an austere and sophisticated Brunello with a slightly brownish hue to its garnet color and aged aromas of dried currants and forest berries, spice, mesquite, soy sauce and licorice. The wine is exceedingly silky and drying

in the mouth. Imported by Empson (USA) Ltd. —M.L.

**91 Il Palazzone 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$85.** Il Palazzone opens with a lean, compact appearance and a bright ruby color. The bouquet delivers a steady aromatic lineup of cherries, wild berries, blue flowers and light shadings of spice. There's more power and persistency here than you'd expect and Il Palazzone has succeeded in making a beautiful wine in a difficult vintage. Imported by Domaine Select Wine Estates. —M.L.

**91 Il Poggione 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$80.** The folks at Il Poggione have produced a fine Brunello with the intensity and aromas you should expect from this four-star vintage. You'll get aromas of cherrywood, cola, wild berries and sour plum. There's a fresh, lean nature to the mouthfeel and a touch of bitter fruit on the close. Imported by Terlato Wines International. —M.L.

**91 La Fortuna 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$50.** Here's a fortunate Brunello that is redolent of all the best aromas the wine has to offer: blackberry, plump cherry, pressed violets and exotic spice. There's a slightly sweet and pulpy quality to the mouthfeel that helps drive this wine smoothly over the palate. Imported by MHW, Ltd. —M.L.

**91 La Poderina 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$75.** This ruby-colored Brunello offer a distinct mineral accent that is surrounded by fruity tones of wild berries, cassis and cherry cola. There's also a meaty or smoky quality here that gives the wine more heft and determination in the mouth. Drink it with grilled sausage. Imported by Vias Imports. —M.L.

**91 Lisini 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$81.** From the S. Angelo in Colle subzone of Montalcino, this seriously fruit-driven expression relies on a solid bouquet of cherry, blackberry and cassis. Oak-driven layers of spice and toast appear with more clarity in the mouth and the finish is capped by long, silky tannins. Drink after 2013. Imported by Empson (USA) Ltd. —M.L.

**91 Mocali 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$40.** Mocali's base Brunello from the four-star 2005 vintage exhibits pretty spice layers of ground clove and black pepper backed by



loads of fresh berry fruit. The smooth mouthfeel presents both crisp freshness and polished tannins. Imported by Michael Skurnik Wines. —M.L.

**91 Pietranera 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$60.** Soft and plush from the start, this bright Brunello spreads over the palate with ease and persistency. Along the way, it imparts flavors of ripe fruit, blackberry, cherry, leather and moist pipe tobacco. The mouthfeel is smooth and thick. Imported by Soilair Selection. —M.L.

**91 Pietroso 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$60.** This is a solid and attractive Brunello with bright cherry notes backed by softer tones of exotic spice, earth and white pepper. The wine boasts a compact and firm feel in the mouth that would pair with duck, pork or game hen. Imported by Enotria Wine Import. —M.L.

**91 Podere Brizio 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$NA.** Creamy and luscious with sweet fruit tones backed by layers of spice and tobacco, this wine does a nice job of showcasing the 2005 vintage of Brunello. The wine is less expressive in the mouth, where it shows a lean, compact feel with bright acidity. A Marc de Grazia selection; various American importers. —M.L.

**91 Poggio Nardone 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$NA.** Vintner Tiziano Ciacci delivers a beautifully extracted wine with rich ruby highlights backed by mature aromas of blackberry, dried currants, clove and cardamom. The wine is smooth and rich in the mouth with tight tannins and bright berry freshness. Imported by Dancing Bear Cellars. —M.L.

**91 Ricci 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$NA.** This 2005 Brunello opens with a soft and supple nose that is accented by tones of sweet cherry, blackberry and spice. All these elements integrate well and the acidity versus tannin equation is equally balanced. There's a slightly sour note on the end that recalls almond skin or cassis. Imported by Italian Wine Growers. —M.L.

**91 San Felice 2005 Campogiovanni (Brunello di Montalcino); \$60.** Wild berry and forest aromas open the nose of this clean and direct Brunello. There's very nice purity and intensity here and the wine showcases layers of red fruit, plum, spice, leather and rose petal. The silky and smooth mouthfeel would

work with meat dishes or hearty pasta. Imported by Premium Brands. —M.L.

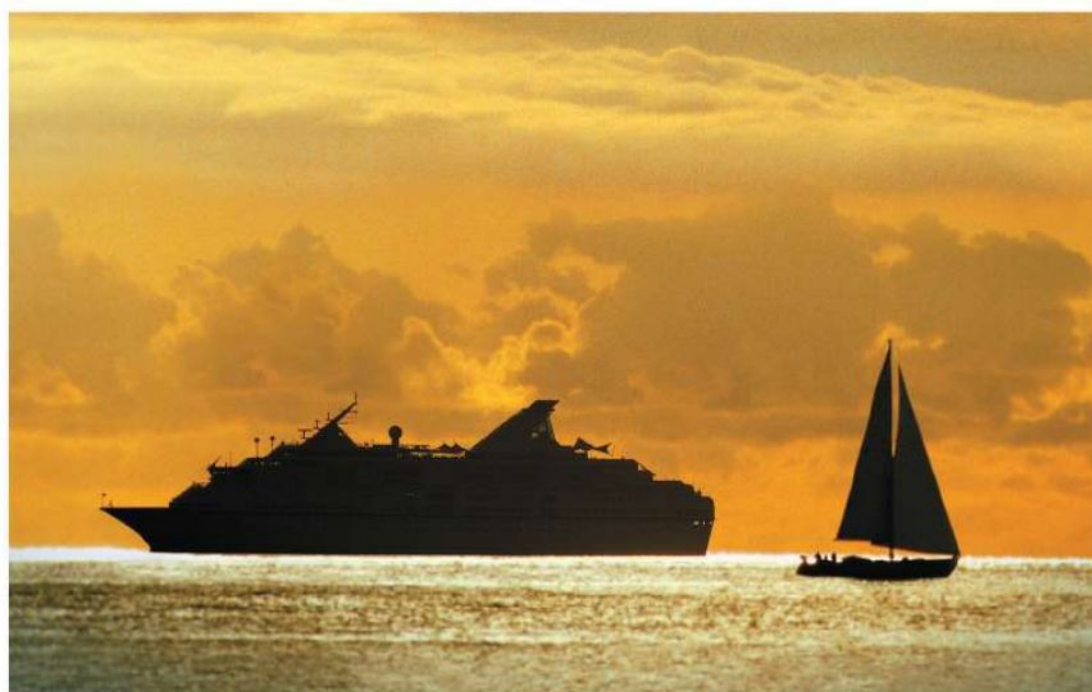
**91 San Lorenzo 2005 Bramante (Brunello di Montalcino); \$50.** Spice, toast and black fruit drive the nose of this plush and ripe Brunello di Montalcino. There are loads of cherry, clove and eucalyptus-like aromas at the back that give the wine a more youthful and fresh impact and fresh acidity seals the deal. The wine is rich and velvety in the mouth. Imported by Votto Vines Importing. —M.L.

**91 Tenimenti Angelini 2005 Val di Suga (Brunello di Montalcino); \$50.** Toasty notes of spice, plum, cherry cola, mesquite and moist earth make this textbook Brunello. It has all the aromatic qualities you seek in a wine of this workmanship and sophistication. There's better density and thickness here too which helps propel the wine's persistency on the palate. —M.L.

**91 Tenuta Poggio il Castellare 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$60.** This pretty Brunello opens with a dark garnet color

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and segues to aromas of black cherry liqueur, blackberry, soy sauce, cola and dark spice. It's a brooding, austere expression from Tuscany with polished tannins and silky texture. Imported by Margate Wine & Spirit Company. —M.L.

**91 Tiezzi 2005 Vigna Soccorso (Brunello di Montalcino); \$45.** Here's a dark and concentrated Brunello with thick aromas of spice, smoke and tobacco lavished over a solid core of black fruit. The nose is definitely on the oak-driven side but the mouth is bursting with fresh fruit notes. It makes for an excellent ensemble. Imported by Michael Skurnik Wines. —M.L.

**91 Villa I Cipressi 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$51.** This is a smooth and enduring Brunello with beautiful tones of ripe cherry, vanilla bean, moist tobacco and loads of blackberry and plum. Drying mineral tones come into focus on the rear and the wine is plush and succulent in the mouth with polished tannins. Imported by Acid Inc Selections. —M.L.

**90 Belpoggio 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$50.** This vintage of Brunello from Belpoggio delivers thick and luscious tones of black fruit, plum, spice, blackberry and plump cherry. The wine is rich and smooth in the mouth with loads of black fruit nuances and an impressive, long finish. So far, this is our favorite vintage from this producer. Imported by Wine Worldwide. —M.L.

**90 Bonacchi 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$NA.** Ripe berry fruit and plump tones of cherry liqueur, blackberry and cassis open the nose of this dark and concentrated Brunello. There's also a hint of wet earth or wild mushroom and the wine is rich and smooth on the finish, with tart cherry flavors. —M.L.

**90 Castello Banfi 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$55.** Dark ruby red in appearance, this bright Brunello opens with vibrant fruit tones that fall harmoniously in step with spicy, oak-driven aromas. Although the wine drinks young now, it has the natural acidity and tannic structure for aging another five years or more. Imported by Banfi Vintners. —M.L.

**90 Ciacci Piccolomini d'Aragona 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$33.** This is an elegant Brunello with pretty aromas of wild berries, cassis and white cherry enhanced by

determined notes of spice and smoke. On the nose the wine is vertical and intense but like many expression from the 2005 vintage, the mouthfeel is toned down in dimension. Imported by Indigenous Selections. —M.L.

**90 Col d'Orcia 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$55.** An improvement over past vintages, thanks to the elegance of its fruit and the richness of its consistency. The wine is bursting with cherry and cassis flavors and it shows harmony and a firm, streamlined nature to its mouthfeel. Imported by Palm Bay International. —M.L.

**90 Coldisole 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$31.** Part of the Lionello Marchesi collection of Italian estates, Coldisole consistently produces quality Brunello with a large enough case production to make the wines reasonably easy to locate in the USA. This expression offers a bright, ruby appearance followed by vibrant aromas of cherry and spice. Imported by W.J. Deutsch & Sons. —M.L.

**90 Fanti 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$55.** An important and historic player in Montalcino, Fanti comes forth this year with yet another beautiful Brunello. The wine is elegant and harmonious with bright layers of cherry fruit, spice and cola. The feeling it imparts in the mouth is one of richness and smoothness and there's a playful touch of sour cherry on the close. Imported by Tutto Vino. —M.L.

**90 Fattoria La Lecciaia 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$45.** Ripe and plump with pretty aromatic layers of blackberry, cherry and spice, this textbook Brunello speaks highly of the beautiful territory that shaped it. The wine is bright, crisp and a touch sour in the mouth with enduring flavors of white cherry and cassis. Imported by Monsieur Touton Selection Ltd. —M.L.

**90 Ferrero 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$50.** This hearty Brunello offers meaty tones of smoked bacon and ham that are wrapped over aromas of prune, mature cherry and blackberry. There's very good persistency here and silky tannins help shape the wine's velvety texture. Imported by Bacchanal Wines. —M.L.

**90 Fossacolle 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$70.** Bright and fresh with buoyant aromas of plum, blackberry and mature

cherry, Fossacolle's 2005 Brunello (by vintner Sergio Marchetti) is a dark and concentrated wine with impressive aromatic depth. The mouthfeel is lean and compact with firm, polished tannins. Imported by Vias Imports. —M.L.

**90 La Fornace 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$55.** La Fornace delivers a gorgeous Brunello this year with pristine aromas of blackberry, wet earth, violets, blackberries, cherries and pipe tobacco. The wine is thick and enduring with tight tannins and a long, but slightly sour finish. Drink after 2012. Imported by Vignaioli. —M.L.

**90 La Gerla 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$40.** An extensive aging program has beautifully shaped this Brunello. The wine shows balanced notes of fruit and spice with a smooth, silky texture. The density is not too thick or overdone and the wine would pair with pasta or risotto. Imported by Slocum & Sons, Inc. —M.L.

**90 Lambardi 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$NA.** Maurizio Lambardi presents a rich and enticing Brunello with a pretty aromatic lineup that spans from bright cherry to sophisticated spice notes. The wine is smooth and firm in the mouth and is ready to drink now. —M.L.

**90 Pian dell'Orino 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$65.** What an improvement over the overripe and jammy 2003 vintage. This is a nicely ripened, garnet-colored Brunello that boasts impressive aromatic intensity. You'll notice aromas of blackberry, spice, cherry cola and warmer tones of wet earth, leather and tobacco. The wine is thick and textured in the mouth. Imported by Polaner Selections. —M.L.

**90 Piccini 2005 Villa al Cortile (Brunello di Montalcino); \$45.** Here's a genuine and fruit-driven expression of Brunello with ripe notes of mature cherry and blackberry followed by a focused mineral tone of black stone or chalkboard. You'll also get interesting layers of eucalyptus, cola and dried herbs at the back. Imported by Aveniu Brands, Inc. —M.L.

**90 Rodolfo Cosimi 2005 Bramante (Brunello di Montalcino); \$40.** Here is a very attractive approach: equal parts fruit (cherry, blackberry and cassis) matched by equal parts spice. There's a thickness and an overall integrity here that gives the wine both staying power and endurance. Pair it with Cornish game



hen or roast pork with fennel seed stuffing. Imported by Enotec Imports, Inc. —M.L.

**90 San Polo 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$70.** Here's a Brunello from the four-star 2005 vintage with a thick, almost creamy bouquet of ripe fruit, smooth cinnamon or clove, and warm tones of used leather and earth. There's a fresh acidic component as well with a bright berry finish. Imported by Winebow. —M.L.

**90 Solaria 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$48.** There's a pretty, buoyant or balsamic quality to this fresh Brunello that helps deliver its fruit and spice aromas in a direct and immediate manner. That clean approach gives the wine a determined and lasting impression in the mouth. Drink it with game meats or steak. Imported by Sherbrooke Cellars. —M.L.

**90 Tenuta di Sesta 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$110.** Tenuta di Sesta consistently produces top-notch Brunello with an eye on tradition and territory. Textbook aromas of cherry, leather, earth and blue flowers emerge from the nose. The mouthfeel is silky, persistent and fresh. Imported by Monsieur Touton Selection Ltd. —M.L.

**90 Tenuta Friggiali 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$55.** Harmony and clean delivery of fruit on the nose and mouth mark this wine. You'll encounter layers of cherry, blackberry, plum, cola and spice. There's a dusting of mineral as well and the tannins are silky but firm. Imported by Vinifera Imports. —M.L.

**90 Villa Poggio Salvi 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$50.** Surrounded by forests teeming with wild animals and boars, Poggio Salvi has one of Montalcino's most isolated and unique vineyards. This wine offers cherry and spice aromas with an easy but extremely polished mouthfeel. Bright acidity at the end underlines those vibrant berries flavors. Imported by Shaw-Ross International Importers. —M.L.

**89 Abbadia Ardenga 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$NA.** This hearty but genuine Brunello delivers steady aromas of cherry, forest fruit, cola, leather and black licorice. It feels simple and easy in the mouth and would make a perfect companion to lasagna with meat sauce. Imported by Market Wine. —M.L.

**89 Casanuova delle Cerbaie 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$65.** This Brunello represents the 2005 vintage perfectly. The wine is not dense or over-concentrated and the aromas are bright and polished. Everything comes in moderation. Pair this wine with lean cuts of red meat on the grill. Imported by Castle Brands. —M.L.

**89 Casisano Colombaio 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$NA.** Compact and lean in texture, this bright Brunello offers brambly notes of wild berry, cassis, white cherry and licorice. The wine is a bit raw and thorny in places but the fresh acidity and berry flavors pull it forward. Imported by Laird & Company. —M.L.

**89 Domus Vitae 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$60.** Here's a smoky, earthy Brunello that shows sophisticated use of oak to render aromas of toast, spice and leather. There are fresh fruit nuances here as well—mainly cherry and blackberry—and the wine is bright, tonic, crisp and relatively lean on the close. Imported by Superior Wines LLC. —M.L.

**89 Fattoi 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$41.** Here's a plump and rich aromatic expression from the 2005 vintage with spicy oak tones that are woven within the wine's natural fabric of cherry and black fruit. However, in the mouth the wine is lightweight and lean with a tannic dusting at the end. Imported by Tricana Imports. —M.L.

**89 Innocenti 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$NA.** There's a sharp, brambly quality to this Brunello that recalls aromas of forest floor, chopped herb and wild berries. You'll also get mineral tones, slight graphite tones and the mouthfeel is both drying and polished. Pair this wine with Porcini risotto or pork medallions. Imported by Mission Wine Company. —M.L.

**89 La Colombina 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$40.** There's a meaty, smoked element to the nose of this Brunello that recalls beef jerky or sizzling bacon. Those hearty aromas are followed by delicate layers of blackberry, cherry and spice. The wine is bright and acidic in the mouth, which makes for an excellent balance. Imported by Michael Skurnik Wines. —M.L.

**89 Lazzeretti 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$NA.** This rich expression from the 2005 vintage shows some signs of aging that are evident in its brownish-garnet color and in the wine's aromas of candied fruit, dried currants, mesquite, cola and licorice. It's powerful and pleasantly intense in the mouth with bright acidity and silky tannins. Drink now. Imported by Joshua Tree Imports. —M.L.

**89 Poggio dell'Aquila 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$NA.** Leaner in consistency and milder in temper, this is an elegant Brunello that puts more emphasis on aromatics than it does on build and heft. It's a feminine, delicate expression with enduring notes of spice, cola and cassis on the finish. —M.L.

**89 Renieri 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$NA.** Renieri's newest Brunello offers perfumed tones of church incense backed by Indian spice and red berries. The wine is bright and tonic with some sour fruit and a nice, silky feel to the tannins.—M.L.

**89 SassodiSole 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$49.** This well-aged Brunello shows a brownish hue in its ruby coloring and exhibits aromas of dried currants, licorice, cola, balsam and ground white pepper. This expression has more heft and determination in the mouth (compared to other Brunellos from the 2005 vintage) and lasts long on the palate. Imported by Supreme Wines & Spirits. —M.L.

**89 Talenti 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$NA.** Riccardo Talenti's 2005 Brunello offers slightly raw or sharp notes of white cherry, forest berry, spice and cola. There's definition and linearity here capped by fresh acidity and a specifically firm or polished quality to the tannins. Imported by Robert Chadderdon Selections. —M.L.

**89 Tassi 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$60.** Elegant and refined with small aromatic pulses of cherry, violets and white mushroom, this wine is very true to the Sangiovese variety. The mouthfeel is light and thin and there's a truly feminine nature to this expression of Brunello. Imported by Wine Emporium. —M.L.

**89 Tenuta San Giorgio 2005 Ugolforte (Brunello di Montalcino); \$50.** This is a ripe and plump Brunello that could use two or three years of cellar aging to allow the oak notes to



fully integrate. The quality of the fruit is excellent—cherry, blackberry and currants abound. Immediately behind those aromas, however, is loads of spice, smoke and tar. Drink after 2012. Imported by Blavod Extreme Spirits. —M.L.

**89 Tiezzi 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$40.** Toasty notes of almond and walnut are followed by black fruit, cherry and cassis. The wine is bright, sharp and cleansing in the mouth with tonic acidity and a compact feel overall. Imported by Michael Skurnik Wines. —M.L.

**88 Canalicchio di Sopra 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$65.** Here's a tight and compact expression from Montalcino with bright tones of cherry wood, wild berries and violets that are delivered in steady aromatic pulses. The finish is not too long or persistent, but the flavors are fresh and very tasty while they last. Imported by Vinifera Imports. —M.L.

**88 Cantina di Montalcino 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$NA.** A deep garnet color and rich concentration characterize this austere Brunello di Montalcino. The nose is redolent of wild berries, cassis, currants, leather, dried tobacco and forest floor. In the mouth, the wine is smooth, silky and polished. —M.L.

**88 Conti Costanti 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$79.** Here's a simple but genuine expression from Montalcino with bright, easy fruit tones covered by a delicate layer of spice and dried tobacco. It's not too complicated or rich, but the wine offers a fresh, easy experience nonetheless. Imported by Empson (USA) Ltd. —M.L.

**88 Fattoria Scopone 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$40.** This is a thick and brawny Brunello that shows a lot more heft and personality than some of the weaker expression from the 2005 vintage. Fattoria Scopone presents a rich and textured wine with ripe notes of cherry liqueur and blackberry followed by firm, gritty tannins. Imported by Siema LLC. —M.L.

**88 Gianni Brunelli 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$75.** Gianni Brunelli's elegant Brunello opens with a bright ruby color and a lean, tonic appearance. Yet the aromas of cherry, anise seed and wild flowers are intense and beautiful. The mouthfeel is streamlined and compact. Imported by Acid Inc Selections. —M.L.

**88 Il Marroneto 2005 Selezione Madonna delle Grazie (Brunello di Montalcino); \$90.** This special selection Brunello shows ripe notes of strawberry and raspberry backed by spice and mature cherry. It's smooth and bright with a touch of sour fruit on the close. Imported by Domaine Select Wine Estates. —M.L.

**88 La Togata 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$72.** Here's a simple but genuine rendition of Brunello with measured aromas of cherry, wild berry and Indian spice. There's more personality in the mouth, however, where the wine shows a soft, supple and smooth texture. Imported by Panebianco. —M.L.

**88 Le Potazzine 2005 Gorelli (Brunello di Montalcino); \$65.** This Brunello opens with a bright ruby color and delivers aromas of cherry cola, Spanish cedar, cigar box, wild berries and spice. It's a streamlined wine that puts more emphasis on elegance than brawn or power. A Marc de Grazia selection; various American importers. —M.L.

**88 Rodolfo Cosimi 2005 Terra Rossa (Brunello di Montalcino); \$60.** Terra Rossa is a bright and polished Brunello with pretty aromas of spice, anise seed, blackberry, cherry and cola. There's a note of sour cherry on the close and the wine shows bright acidity that would pair well with succulent meat and cheesy pasta dishes. Imported by Enotec Imports, Inc. —M.L.

**88 Tenuta Oliveto 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$NA.** Among the most extracted and thick Brunellos of this vintage, Tenuta Oliveto offers a compelling wine with fresh tones of cherry, red apple and wild berries. There's a slightly thorny or sharp nature to the bouquet that reminds you of sour fruit, blue flowers and underbrush. Imported by Ima Imports. —M.L.

**87 Baccinetti 2005 Saporioia (Brunello di Montalcino); \$45.** Here's a dark and well concentrated Brunello with aromas that recall wild berries and appleskin. The fresh intensity of those aromas suggest slight volatility, but this doesn't seem to distract too much from the overall picture. In the mouth, the wine is very polished and squeaky clean. Imported by Premier Wine Co. —M.L.

**87 Canneta 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$NA.** There's a meaty, ripe aspect to the aromas here that recall black cherry and smoked ham. But there's also an edgy green tone that lends a slightly bitter impression in the mouth. Imported by Orvino Imports & Distribution. —M.L.

**87 Collemattoni 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$55.** Collemattoni delivers a ripe, fruit-driven Brunello that will appeal to those who enjoy plump, jammy notes in their red wine. Raspberry, strawberry and mature cherry stand out within a larger embroidery of spice and tobacco. The wine is soft and smooth with sweet berry notes on the close. Imported by Vignaioli. —M.L.

**87 Il Marroneto 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$60.** There's a brambly, slightly raw or sharp note here that comes off as white cherry, wild berry and spice. In the mouth, the wine shows bright acidity and polished tannins. Imported by Domaine Select Wine Estates. —M.L.

**87 Vasco Sassetti 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$NA.** Earthy aromas of white mushroom and dried roses that are characteristic of Tuscan Sangiovese are what you notice first here. The wine then segues to fruit and spice aromas, although those berry notes are on the mature and jammy side. Fresh acidity and firm tannins suggest a pairing with red meat. Imported by Franco Wine Imports. —M.L.

## SPAIN RED WINES

### RIBERA DEL DUERO

**100 Viña Sastre 2006 Pesus (Ribera del Duero); \$750.** If there's any such thing as the perfect Spanish red, Pesus is it. A blend of 80% Tempranillo with other grapes including Cabernet Sauvignon, this wine sees 200% new oak, resulting in a thick, dark, tannic beauty that bubbles over with toast, cola, mint, chocolate and spice aromas. The mouth is sheer heaven; a mile deep in terms of berry flavor and more, but faultless and smooth. Shows outstanding structure and power, and should age well for 15–20 years. Hails from two 100-year-old vineyards and some baby vines with but 25 years of



age. Crazy expensive but only 150 cases were made; drink 2013–2030. Imported by De Maison Selections, Inc. **Cellar Selection.** —M.S.

**98 Viña Sastre 2005 Regina Vides (Ribera del Duero); \$195.** From vines that are between 80 and 100 years, this is a marvelous example of top-notch Spanish red wine, regardless of region and grape variety. Hails from four vineyards, and the product is dark, concentrated, sultry, masculine and impressive. Giant black fruit flavors, texture, richness, coffee and cola make it truly special. Drinkable now; best in 3–5 more years. Imported by De Maison Selections, Inc. —M.S.

**97 Aalto 2006 PS (Ribera del Duero); \$115.** A beautiful but enormous style of red wine with char, leather and saturated black fruit aromas. There's also some lemony oak that will shed itself with time. Overall, it's rich, delicious and a real fruit bomb with chocolate, vanilla, caramel, coffee and mocha, all of which are reflections of the oak aging it sees. PS stands for *seleccionados*, and it's really an example of the new school in full session. Best 2013–2017 due to its heft and extraction. Imported by European Cellars. **Cellar Selection.** —M.S.

**96 Aalto 2006 Tempranillo (Ribera del Duero); \$55.** Mariano Garcia's deft winemaking touch and propensity for making monster RDDs is etched into this massive, extracted heavyweight, and wow is it good! After a touch of early heat, there's dusty black fruit aromas, spice galore, floral notes and then a huge palate of raw blackness and finally an explosion of creamy mocha, vanilla and woodspice. Needs a couple of more years but not 10 or 20. Imported by European Cellars. **Cellar Selection.** —M.S.

**96 Viña Sastre 1999 Pago de Santa Cruz Gran Reserva (Ribera del Duero); \$119.** A classic wine with maturity but still a lot to give. Aged 24 months in American oak then 12 more months in French barrels, this GR is leathery and powerful, with firm tannins supporting dry berry fruit flavors accented by copious amounts of tobacco, mint, vanilla and more. Will continue to age and soften; drink now through 2025. Imported by De Maison Selections, Inc. **Cellar Selection.** —M.S.

**95 Monteabellón 2006 Finca La Blanca Tempranillo (Ribera del Duero); \$NA.** Having only tasted this winery's

basic RdDs, this single-vineyard whopper comes as a huge and pleasant surprise. The nose is pure as can be and driving, with richness, coffee and more. The palate is juicy and intense, with boysenberry, blackberry, toast and chocolate. Very concentrated and powerful; a wine that exudes and also inspires passion. Drink 2012–2021. Imported by JW Sieg Wines. **Editors' Choice.** —M.S.

**95 Vega Sicilia 2000 Unico (Ribera del Duero); \$450.** Like liquid silk, it's so smooth and supple. Aromas of fresh mountain herbs pour forth from the glass along with the scents of cherry, cough drop and dried spices. Very light on its feet with pronounced elegance as opposed to raw power. The palate is sleek and feminine, with flavors of dried red fruits, raspberry and light medicinality. Spectacular as per usual, with 85% Tempranillo and 15% Cab Sauvignon. Drink now–2025. Imported by Europvin. **Editors' Choice.** —M.S.

**94 Astrales 2007 Tempranillo (Ribera del Duero); \$67.** Shows almost all that's great about the region: dark, smoky, floral berry and chocolate aromas followed by juicy, acid-driven boysenberry, spice, bitter chocolate and peppery flavors. An excellent effort for a tough vintage, with dynamite power and a poise. Drink 2012–2018. Imported by Grapes of Spain. —M.S.

**94 Pago de los Capellanes 2006 Reserva (Ribera del Duero); \$54.** Sensational RDD Reserva with dry, smoky, elegant aromas and then a super-juicy, fresh, finely etched palate with composed cola, cherry, raspberry and more. This wine exhibits merit after merit; it's complex yet easy to like. Really excellent for the money. Drink 2011–2018. Imported by Antalva Imports. —M.S.

**94 Viña Sastre 2006 Pago de Santa Cruz Tempranillo (Ribera del Duero); \$84.** A unique style of old-vines, single-vineyard Ribera aged 100% in new American oak, thus it delivers telltale aromas of fennel, dill, vanilla and licorice/anisette. Aged 18 months in barrel so it's oaky, but it's also dark, loaded with black fruit and spice, and chocolaty. Nuances include cola and the perfect raisin. A lovely wine that hits the spot. Best 2012–2020. Imported by De Maison Selections, Inc. —M.S.

**93 Alion 2006 Tempranillo (Ribera del Duero); \$90.** A lovely, modern-styled



wine with clean, pure elegance on the nose, palate and finish. It opens with a blast of toast, and then unfolds with fresh black fruit flavors, smooth but lively tannins, and nice touches of heft, drive and simplicity. As good as Alion is, it's not a complicated or overly complex wine. Best 2011–2017. Imported by Europvin. **Editors' Choice.** —M.S.

## 93 **Astrales 2006 Christina Tempranillo (Ribera del Duero); \$87.**

Not as expressive as other Astrales wines, but still very rich and bruising, with a smooth, lush, wonderful mouthfeel and attractive aromas. Concentrated but not as voluminous as many RDD top-rate wines, with flavors of fig, wild berry, chocolate and pepper. Lots to ponder here; an excellent example of what this winery is capable of. Drink 2012–2020. Imported by Grapes of Spain. —M.S.

## 93 **Felix Callejo 2005 Seleccion de Vinedos de la Familia Tempranillo (Ribera del Duero); \$100.**

A rich, deep style of Tempranillo with earth and leather aromas along with a lot of new oak. Violet in color, with matching aromas of plum, berry, tobacco and chocolate. Pretty yet stout in the mouth, with intense berry fruit flavors and all the length one could ask for. Rich and ready to drink, but can age until 2018 with no problem. Imported by The Artisan Collection. —M.S.

## 93 **Val Sotillo 2004 Reserva Tempranillo (Ribera del Duero); \$60.**

Wonderful on the bouquet, where earthy notes blend perfectly with alert, bright fruit aromas. This is a sizable, full-bodied wine with leather, lively fruit character and a dose of rich chocolate. It's in excellent shape and shows impressive balance and depth. Delicious to the core, with heft and noticeable oak that should lessen if given more time. Drink now–2019. Imported by Tradewinds Specialty Imports. —M.S.

## 93 **Vizcarra 2006 Ines Tempranillo (Ribera del Duero); \$125.**

More muscular and dark than its sibling Celia, with rich, jammy, sweet aromas of mocha and baked berries. It's an oaky style that works due to the wine's massive concentration and structure. It flows easily with no coarseness or roughness. Excellent and cut from the modern mold. Drink now–2018. Imported by Ole Imports. —M.S.

## 92 **Carmelo Rodero 2005 Reserva Tempranillo (Ribera del Duero); \$NA.**

A very fruity, forward wine that's rich and friendly and quite delicious. The nose tips things off with black plum, chocolate and other sweet, dense aromas, while the palate is full of boysenberry, raspberry, cherry and fine tannins and overall balance. Simply put, this is a fine RDD with vibrancy and lots of quality. Drink now–2018. —M.S.

## 92 **Luis Cañas 2006 Hiru 3 Racimos Tempranillo (Rioja); \$118.**

Dense, rich and well carved, with chocolate, balsamic notes, moss and burnt toast to go with beefy black fruit aromas. The palate is full, generous and not at all lazy, with blasting blackberry, cassis, tobacco and toasty flavors. Acidic and tannic on one hand, but deep and pure on the other. It needs a few more years to knit together. Drink 2012–2018. Imported by Henriot Inc. —M.S.

## 92 **Pago de los Capellanes 2004 El Picón (Ribera del Duero); \$240.**

Bright, snappy and somewhat high in acidity, but also vibrant and excellent as a whole. The fruit falls squarely into the plum, raspberry and red currant spectrum, while that acidity pushes the wine to run and run. A dynamo with length, character, structure and angularity. Probably not for those who prefer dark, lush RDDs. Drinkable now but could still use another five years of time on its side. Imported by Antalva Imports. **Cellar Selection.** —M.S.

## 92 **Pago de los Capellanes 2005 Parcela El Nogal Tempranillo (Ribera del Duero); \$NA.**

A super-classy wine with intensity to spare. The nose and palate are both high-toned and piercing, and red fruit aromas and flavors are supreme. Along with the currant and raspberry character, there's mild medicinal flavors, cherry cough drop and lots of length and power. Impressive for sure. Drink 2012–2020. Imported by Antalva Imports. —M.S.

## 92 **Vega Sicilia 2005 Valbuena (Ribera del Duero); \$190.**

Opens with classy aromas of lavender, thyme, sage and medicinality, i.e. plum liqueur. Super-silky and smooth in the mouth, with velvety tannins and an elegance not found in most of the staunch, powerful wines of the region. Finishes almost creamy, with notes of tobacco, vanilla and cedar. 85% Tempranillo with 15% Merlot and Malbec. Imported by Europvin. —M.S.

## 91 **Garcia Figuero 2006 Tinus (Ribera del Duero); \$599.**

A new specialty wine from the Figuero family shows a meaty, roasted bouquet and some leather, while below the aromas there's a palate that's rich, profound, slightly baked in character and very sweet and deep. A Yum Yum type of rich RDD with a finish defined by baked blackberry and molasses. Drink now–2013. Imported by Quintessential Wines. —M.S.

## 91 **Montecastro 2006 Tempranillo (Ribera del Duero); \$45.**

Shows some youthful spunk and minerality on the nose along with ample char and pepper. The palate is deep and layered with pure black fruit flavors, chocolate and mellow tannins, and overall there's no off aromas, tastes or textures to do battle with. Drink now–2015. Imported by Classical Wines. —M.S.

## 91 **Val Sotillo 2006 Crianza (Ribera del Duero); \$35.**

Vibrant and honest, with expressive raspberry and cherry aromas and flavors accented by mint leaf, liqueur and cassis. Really hits the spot and then fades away in no hurry. A smoking-good crianza that hammers home the fact that Ismael Arroyo's wines are still leaders in RDD. Drink now–2015. Imported by Tradewinds Specialty Imports. —M.S.

## 91 **Viña Sastre 2007 Crianza Tempranillo (Ribera del Duero); \$33.**

Kicks off with a blend of herbs, wild flowers, lavender and toasty oak. It's a fresh, clean, semi-rich RDD with beautiful berry fruit, chocolate and a slight bit of char. An exciting wine with delicious core flavors and no toughness, hard tannins or heat. A bit dark and bitter on the finish, like a good espresso. Drink now–2014. Imported by De Maison Selections, Inc. —M.S.

## 91 **Vizcarra 2006 Celia Tempranillo (Ribera del Duero); \$125.**

A bright and very pretty wine that bursts with raspberry and plum aromas. The palate is finely balanced and clean as a whistle, and in general this small-production bottling represents the region gracefully, but with some kick and power. It only gets richer and more serious with airing. Drink 2012–2022. Imported by Ole Imports. —M.S.

## 90 **Felix Callejo 2006 Reserva Tempranillo (Ribera del Duero); \$40.**

Rich and very good, with depth and a chocolatey essence that shows itself on the front and back



ends of the wine. Pure in terms of berry fruit flavors, and with good verve and mouthfeel. A balanced, spot-on wine with serious structure, style and follow through. Drink now–2015. Imported by The Artisan Collection. —M.S.

**90 O. Fournier 2006 Spiga Tempranillo (Ribera del Duero); \$31.** Starts with dark, statuesque aromas led by mineral, leather and wood smoke. A powerful, intense wine with clean, rich flavors of black plum, chocolate and raisin. It's a touch on the sweet and chewy side, with some tannic bite and heat, but overall it's rock-solid and very nice. Drink now–2013. Imported by Fine Estates From Spain. —M.S.

**89 Carmelo Rodero 2007 Crianza Tempranillo (Ribera del Duero); \$NA.** For an '07, this shows nice fruit and a direct, honest approach. The nose offers up spice and berry aromas along with some buttery oak, and that creamy woodiness carries onto the palate and blends well with juicy, crisp red fruit flavors that are representative of the vintage and region. Drink now–2014. —M.S.

**89 Felix Callejo 2004 Gran Reserva Tempranillo (Ribera del Duero); \$70.** A wine that reflects its northern Ribera location (Sotillo) through zesty, pointed aromas and some gritty char and minerality. The nose shows plenty of solid oak, chocolate and spice, and in the mouth the acids are a bit sharp and thus the wine is kind of spiky and angular. Still, it's a very nice RDD, just not as generous as it could or should be. Drink now–2019. Imported by The Artisan Collection. —M.S.

**89 Montecastro 2007 Alconte Tempranillo (Ribera del Duero); \$23.** Alconte is the new second wine from Montecastro, but it doesn't take a back seat to anything. It's powerful juice, with a strong mineral/floral element on the bouquet. Aged only a year in oak, it maintains a crisp, charred character and shows tight raspberry flavors, chocolate and pepper. Features all the right stuff for a debut wine from a strained vintage. Imported by Classical Wines. —M.S.

**89 Neo 2007 Punta Esencia Tempranillo (Ribera del Duero); \$95.** Floral and fruity, with clean aromas. In the mouth, it's saturated and intense as if offers up a meaty set of dense fruit flavors. Doesn't show as

much complexity, layering and variety as we might like to see, but it's pretty flashy and good for a 2007, a vintage that was problematic in this region. Imported by Grapes of Spain. —M.S.

**88 Neo 2007 Tempranillo (Ribera del Duero); \$69.** A good to very good wine with medicinality on the nose that takes over the aromatics. There's also the slightest bit of hard cheese and stem on the bouquet, so overall it is fighting an uphill battle. Along the way it delivers flavors of cough drop, cherry and a good, solid finish. Imported by Grapes of Spain. —M.S.

**88 Viña Sastre 2008 Roble Tempranillo (Ribera del Duero); \$20.** Opens with young, punchy aromas of candied raspberry and strawberry. The body is easygoing but the flavors and overall character are more complex than you might expect because Sastre only made this wine and a crianza in '08 while eschewing its high-end wines. With this youngster expect moderate size and intensity, and a full, semilong finish. Imported by De Maison Selections, Inc. —M.S.

**87 Protos 2005 Reserva Tempranillo (Ribera del Duero); \$NA.** Seems more earthy and damp than you might expect, with mineral notes. Sort of fiery and rugged on the palate, with tough tannins and only modest roundness and richness for a reserva-level wine from a good vintage. Shows some bitter chocolate on the finish. Needs another year in bottle to show better. Imported by RV Distributors. —M.S.

**86 Protos 2007 Crianza Tempranillo (Ribera del Duero); \$NA.** A simple but nice style of Ribera wine with open plum and berry aromas as well as snappy, juicy, fresh red fruit flavors. It's a touch biting and zesty at this point, but if you don't mind a little bite and zap it's perfectly good. Imported by RV Distributors. —M.S.

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## RIOJA

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**93 Muga 2006 Torre Muga (Rioja); \$94.** Among the world's bruising, full-bodied wines, Torre Muga is a flag bearer. This vintage offers cola, pepper, coffee and sweet blackberry fruit aromas, and the palate is tannic, acidic, grabby and full of life. Flavors of blackberry, dark plum and spice are pure as they come, with espresso on the finish. Let this sit another

few years to allow the fierce tannins to mellow; best 2012–2017. Imported by Fine Estates From Spain. **Cellar Selection.** —M.S.

**91 Muga 2006 Aro (Rioja); \$201.** Deep and lavishly oaked, with aromas of toasted hickory, purple grapes, gaseous earth and black, heavy fruit. Nothing is shy or subtle here; it's an erupting volcano of hard black fruit, tannin, hickory smoke and heat. It shows flashes of elegance and potential but also a lot of raw power. Needs a minimum of 3–4 years of cellar time to soften up. Tempranillo with 30% Graciano. Imported by Fine Estates From Spain. **Cellar Selection.** —M.S.

**91 Solabal 2006 Esculle de Solabal (Rioja); \$118.** A ruggedly dark and modern Rioja with cola, rooty black fruit and burnt toast draped on a thick, mocha-laden nose. The palate is huge and grabby as well as rich and lovable, with black fruit, mocha, coffee ice cream and slight raisin flavors. Tannic and tough on the finish, with spice, herbs and chocolate. Drink from 2011 through 2015. Imported by Fine Estates From Spain. —M.S.

**90 Baron De Ley 2004 7 Viñas Reserva (Rioja); \$68.** A rich, more modern type of Rioja with dark color, slightly raisiny berry aromas and molasses, vanilla and mocha on the nose. The palate is full and chewy, with cola, fig and wild berry flavors. Stylish and creamy on the finish, and very pleasant as a whole. 55% Tempranillo with four other grapes blended in, including Graciano and Gamacha. Imported by Frederick Wildman & Sons, Ltd. —M.S.

**90 Finca Allende 2006 Calvario (Rioja); \$145.** A fine wine but not up to par with previous renditions. This vintage has proprietary blueberry, floral and jammy aromas, while the palate is narrow and a touch sheering and tannic, with jammy dark berry flavors and not a lot of variety or complexity. Forward, linear and monotone, but what's here is quite good. Drink now–2013. Imported by Fine Estates From Spain. —M.S.

**90 Marqués de Campo Nuble 2006 Reserva Tempranillo (Rioja); \$22.** Full and spicy from the get-go, with hints of clove vying with savory berry and leather. The optimum word to describe this wine is friendly, meaning it delivers ripeness, berry flavors and sweet, spicy accents that complete the package. Leans toward



baked and sweet but keeps things properly framed. Imported by USA Wine West. —M.S.

**90 Sierra Cantabria 2006 Crianza Tempranillo (Rioja); \$19.** Like almost all wines from this label, the welcome mat is rolled out. The nose shows textbook tea, herb, black cherry and leathery notes, while the palate is round, pure in feel, and full, with sous bois, light oak and dark fruit flavors. Long and persistent on the finish. A wine that gets it right. Imported by Fine Estates From Spain. —M.S.

**89 Marqués de Campo Nuble 2006 Campo Burgo Reserva Tempranillo (Rioja); \$20.** Roasted and charred, with a clear and present barrel influence along with thyme, herbs and tomato leaf. In the mouth, it's sweet and ready, with ripe berry flavors touched up by cocoa. Toasty and a little minty on the finish, but flavorful and perfectly good as a whole. Imported by USA Wine West. —M.S.

**88 Altanza 2007 Capitoso Tempranillo (Rioja); \$16.** Good, pure, dark and teetering on powerful, with strong, rich black plum aromas. The mouth is staunch and balanced, with full dark fruit flavors of blackberry along with bitter chocolate. Solid and clean throughout. A winner in its price range. Imported by The Artisan Collection. —M.S.

**88 Bodegas Franco-Españolas 2006 Rioja Bordón Crianza Tempranillo (Rioja); \$12.** A nice, floral, medium-bodied Rioja that should not steer anyone wrong. The nose is harmonized and not overpowering, while the feel is good and easy and the flavors of berry, plum and mild chocolaty oak work well together. Holds its line on the finish as well. Imported by Admiral Imports. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

**88 Bodegas Valdemar 2006 Conde de Valdemar Crianza Tempranillo (Rioja); \$15.** In many ways, this is Valdemar's best wine in that it's always consistent and satisfying. The nose on this vintage offers a blast of sweet coconut and then black fruit aromas, and while there's acidity front and center it doesn't come across sharp. Instead, the focus is on plum and raspberry fruit and a finish that picks up steam. Imported by CIV/USA. —M.S.

**88 Castillo Labastida 2004 Reserva (Rioja); \$22.** Nice wine with standard Rioja aromas of raspberry, vanilla, licorice and

dill. The palate has life and kick due to protruding acidity, while the flavor profile is based on snappy, high-toned plum and red berry. Softer on the finish, where butter and vanilla notes rise up. Drinkable now but will hold for another few years. Imported by Winebow. —M.S.

**88 Marques de Tomares 2006 Crianza (Rioja); \$19.** Falls into the dark and roasted category, with aromas of leather, black fruits and toast. The palate is saturated and full, with dark, roasted black fruit, molasses and spice flavors. Warm on the finish almost to the point of being hot, but not quite. A very solid wine overall. Imported by Parador Selections, LLC. —M.S.

**88 Ramirez de la Piscina 2004 Reserva Tempranillo (Rioja); \$20.** Familiar aromas of black fruit, licorice and earth get it going, followed by saturated body weight that reaches all corners of the mouth while displaying earthy, chunky blackberry and black cherry flavors. Flush, comfortable and slightly heavy. Drink now through 2012. Imported by Fine Estates From Spain. —M.S.

**87 Pagos del Rey 2007 El Circulo Crianza (Rioja); \$14.** Sort of scratchy and generic on the nose, with reasonably fresh red fruit aromas. The mouthfeel is angular and clipped by piercing acidity, while the flavors are of nice but regular black cherry and plum. Fairly juicy and fresh as a whole. Imported by Luneau USA Inc. —M.S.

**87 Bodegas San Prudencio 2007 Envite Crianza (Rioja); \$22.** Opens with sweet fruit aromas, a whiff of oak and red candy, while the mouthfeel is juicy and mostly fresh, with clean fruit flavors and more than adequate ripeness and sweetness. Fresh, composed and pleasant in the scheme of things. Imported by The Artisan Collection. —M.S.

**87 Finca del Marquesado 2006 Crianza (Rioja); \$10.** Composed, balanced and with all the dots connected; this is what we like about basic, affordable Rioja. It's fleshy yet fresh, with snappy cherry and raspberry flavors accented by a wave of vanilla that continues onto the finish. Blends good flavors, weight and acidic crispness. Imported by CIV/USA. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

**86 Altanza 2004 Lealtanza Selección Especial Reserva Tempranillo**

**(Rioja); \$36.** A chunky wine with compost, coffee and leather on the nose. The palate holds onto that chunkiness with clumsy flatness that goes with herbal plum and berry flavors. Airing allows it to unfold and find a better place, but always does it seem heavy and on the murky side. Imported by The Artisan Collection. —M.S.

**86 Bodegas Bilbainas 2007 Viña Zaco Tempranillo (Rioja); \$15.** Opens with bright, popping cherry aromas that are straightforward, much like the rest of the show. The palate is regular and healthy in feel, with standard cherry and raspberry flavors. Finishes the slightest bit toasty and warm. Nice but basic Rioja. Imported by Aveniu Brands, Inc. —M.S.

**86 Bodegas Palacio 2007 Glorioso Tempranillo (Rioja); \$10.** Mildly earthy, leathery and light in color, with rooty aromas and tree bark on the nose. The palate is good, maybe a bit sharp and angular, with savory flavors of tomato, red plum and earth. Dry on the finish and good for everyday consumption. Imported by HAB North America. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

**86 Finca Nueva 2006 Crianza Tempranillo (Rioja); \$15.** Grape-y and potent as Rioja crianzas go, with a medium-to-full-sized palate that's full of bright acidity and standard but solid berry fruit flavors. It's the slightest bit creamy and thick on the finish, but overall it's about as middle of the road as any wine on the market. Imported by Fine Estates From Spain. —M.S.

**85 Marques de Tomares 2007 Don Román (Rioja); \$15.** A standard Riojano red with crisp cherry aromas followed by a zesty, slightly tart palate that carries punchy cherry fruit, acidity and little nuance or character. Tastes a tiny bit sour by today's measurements, but it's still pretty good for being crisp and acid-driven. Imported by Parador Selections, LLC. —M.S.

**85 Vallobera 2004 Reserva Tempranillo (Rioja); \$29.** For an '04 reserva, this wine is more edgy, grabby and high in acid than expected. The nose shows old world leather, spearmint and smoked meat more than vibrant fruit, yet the palate is tangy, citric and tastes of red raspberry and plum. Slightly more creamy on the finish, but still it remains scratchy. Imported by Axial Wines USA. —M.S.



## CAMPO DE BORJA

**92 Alto Moncayo 2007 Garnacha (Campo de Borja); \$45.** Excellent Garnacha in very modern dressing. The nose is sweet, candied, lightly baked and rich, with hints of prune, coconut and fine aged cheese. The palate is smooth and deep, with blackberry, molasses and licorice flavors. Sturdy and studly wine, with weight and only a pinch of heat and bite. Six hundred cases produced; drink now–2012. Imported by Fine Estates From Spain. —M.S.

**91 Alto Moncayo 2007 Aquilon Garnacha (Campo de Borja); \$161.** Smoky, toasty and rich, with no shortage of power and fire in the hole. The palate is meaty and dense, with black fruit, black pepper and heat. But even with the unavoidable heat the wine shows balance along with attractive finishing flavors of fig, beef jerky, licorice and chocolate. Undeniably big and powerful at 16.5% alcohol. Drink soon, and with food. Otherwise it might seem too hot and burning. Imported by Fine Estates From Spain. —M.S.

**91 Alto Moncayo 2007 Veraton Garnacha (Campo de Borja); \$28.** Smoky, roasted and spicy on the nose, with berry fruit, licorice and black pepper scents. Definitely a warm, ripe, chunky wine with smooth blackberry, chocolate and mocha flavors. Big and with plenty of oak, but the integration and overall balance are commendable. Best now through 2012. Imported by Fine Estates From Spain. —M.S.

**90 Borsao 2008 Tres Picos Garnacha (Campo de Borja); \$17.** Tres Picos, or Three Peaks, ranks as a go-to wine for fans of round, smooth, slightly oaky reds. The bouquet is all mocha and smoky/oaky richness, while the sticky, rich palate deals blackberry and chewy, rooty medicinal. Oak and spicy late, with licorice and warmth. The best thing is that it's not heavy or overextracted despite being youthful and modern in style. Imported by Fine Estates From Spain. —M.S.

**90 Pagos del Moncayo 2008 Garnacha (Campo de Borja); \$30.** Immediately this wine stands out from most Aragón-region Garnachas. It's deep and poised, with smoky blackberry aromas. The palate is deftly woven, saturated and meaty but also

creamy and smooth, with mocha and controlled tannins. Freshness is not lost despite its modern, clean power. Drink now through 2013. Imported by Axial Wines USA. —M.S.

**89 Borsao 2007 Crianza Selección (Campo de Borja); \$16.** This is a really good example of a blended wine from Aragón. It's 50% Garnacha with 25% each Tempranillo and Cabernet Sauvignon, and thus it is more complex and interesting than your run-of-the-mill varietal Grenache. Mellow aromas of ripe fruit and spice open things up, followed by balanced flavors of berry fruits, vanilla and cream. Easygoing and highly recommended for the price. Imported by Fine Estates From Spain. —M.S.

**88 Quo 2008 Old Vines Grenache (Campo de Borja); \$15.** Deep and earthy smelling, with meatiness, black fruit and hickory notes to the bouquet. The wine offers concentration and thickness, with ripe, slightly medicinal flavors of plum and blackberry. The same goes for the finish, and overall this is a medium-to-full Grenache that gets it done. Imported by The Artisan Collection. —M.S.

**87 Almira 2009 Los Dos Old Vines Grenache-Syrah (Campo de Borja); \$8.** Like most base-level Garnachas, this one has a sweet, candied aromatic cover. But unlike many it has depth, purity and avoids boring, offensive sweetness. The flavors of raspberry and boysenberry are bright, and it maintains balance and integrity through the finish. A nice wine for under \$10. Imported by Winebow. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

**87 Borsao 2009 Viña Borgia Grenache (Campo de Borja); \$6.** A steal for six bucks; the nose is floral and black, but under control. Meanwhile, the palate is bouncy, round and balanced, with juicy black plum and wild berry flavors. Clean and solid. Imported by Fine Estates From Spain. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

**86 Borsao 2009 Monte Oton Garnacha (Campo de Borja); \$7.** Here's another good value red from Borsao. It's about as potent and packed a wine as you'll find for \$7, and while it's jumpy, young and aggressive, it's also full of jammy black fruit, sticky extraction and firm tannins. A classic mouthfiller with spunk, color and heft. Imported by Fine Estates From Spain. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

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**86 Pagos del Moncayo 2008 Tinto Joven Garnacha-Syrah (Campo de Borja); \$17.** Piercing to start, with leathery, bacony and campfire aromas. Saturated, although healthy, if a bit hard and tannic. Flavors of bacon and clove are right up there with black fruit and syrupy richness, and clove carries onto the finish. Needs time to breathe and unfold; 65% Garnacha and 35% Syrah. Imported by Axial Wines USA. —M.S.

## CALATAYUD

**92 Bodegas Ateca 2007 Atteca Armas Old Vines Garnacha (Calatayud); \$45.** Potent, deep and lush, with minty aromas and a lot more wild berry and tobacco than anything crisp or piquant. The palate is lush and packed full of ripe berry and black plum, while the finish is spirited, ripe, full and lusty. A rich, dark style of wine for modern palates. Ready now and over the next two years. Imported by Fine Estates From Spain. —M.S.

**87 Bodegas Ateca 2008 Atteca Old Vines Garnacha (Calatayud); \$16.** Minty black cherry aromas give it a solid opening, but there's also some mild cleanser and paint scents to the nose. The palate is basic, snappy, fresh and carries good weight, while the flavors are sweet, berry-oriented and softened by vanilla. A good Grenache with good balance. Imported by Fine Estates From Spain. —M.S.

**86 Bodegas y Vinedos de Jalón 2008 Viña Alarba Old Vines Grenache (Calatayud); \$10.** The opening of smoke, rubber and black cherry comes across as being dark and good. The palate holds form with lively cherry, plum and currant flavors and finally a medium-long, somewhat warm and meaty finish. Good for an everyday, no-frills Garnacha. Imported by The Artisan Collection. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

**85 Bodegas y Vinedos de Jalón 2008 Los Pinos Old Vines Grenache (Calatayud); \$13.** Clean, fruity and snappy, with pointed red fruit aromas and flavors as well as higher than normal acidity. Tastes fresh and forward and entirely straightforward, with a hollow but easy finish and mild but controlled sharpness. Imported by The Artisan Collection. —M.S.

**85 Cruz de Piedra 2007 Capricho Garnacha (Calatayud); \$20.** Aromas of pine, rubber and rhubarb are austere, and so is the rest of the wine. The palate is run by acidity, which is sharp and scouring. Flavors are tart and underdone, with pie cherry and red raspberry. Sheering but admittedly cleansing, with surprising sourness. Imported by Axial Wines USA. —M.S.

## PENEDÈS

**94 Torres 2006 Reserva Real (Penedès); \$160.** A beauty of a wine, with black plum, berry, cocoa, sandalwood and moss on the nose. The palate is huge but perfectly balanced, with flavors of tobacco, blackberry and cassis. The blend is straight from Bordeaux (Cabernet Sauvignon, Cab Franc and Merlot), but everything else screams Spain. Pure, long, smooth and easy in terms of tannic bite, with good aging potential. Drink 2012–2020. Imported by Dreyfus, Ashby & Co. **Editors' Choice.** —M.S.

**93 Torres 2006 Mas La Plana Cabernet Sauvignon (Penedès); \$63.** Mocha, toasty smoke and pure berry aromas ring the bell, and the palate follows with fine balance and flavors of vanilla-infused raspberry, plum and cassis. A little rich and creamy now but still structured and ageable for another 10 years. A seriously good Spanish Cabernet with world-class character. Best from 2013–2018. Imported by Dreyfus, Ashby & Co. **Cellar Selection.** —M.S.

**92 Torres 2007 Mas La Plana Cabernet Sauvignon (Penedès); \$63.** An opening salvo of coffee, tobacco and pure berry fruit give this Cabernet a fine lift-off. The palate exhibits freshness and full-bodied power, while the flavors run toward deep black fruits, tobacco, herbs, vanilla and cocoa. Long and rich as well on the finish. Best to set this aside for at least four years before revisiting, but drinkable now with decanting. Imported by Dreyfus, Ashby & Co. **Cellar Selection.** —M.S.

## OTHER SPANISH REDS

**90 Cellers Sant Rafel 2007 Solpost Fresc (Montsant); \$19.** An impressive Montsant blend of Grenache, Cabernet and Syrah with a purple color and friendly black fruit

aromas. Not overly complex but deeply drawn and balanced. The plum, fresh raisin and blackberry flavors are smooth and structured, and overall flavor and liveliness are key attributes. Drink now through 2012. Imported by Parador Selections, LLC. —M.S.

**89 Gonzalez Byass 2005 Finca Moncloa Cabernet Sauvignon-Syrah (Vino de la Tierra de Cádiz); \$35.** Concentrated and solid, but not a wrecking ball. The nose offers tobacco and earthy aromas, while the palate is jammy and smooth, with sweet flavors of blackberry, fig and tobacco. Spicy enough and pretty long on the finish, with another wave of tobacco. Almost too ripe but not quite. 70% Cabernet Sauvignon and 30% Syrah, as is the 87-point 2006 vintage. Imported by San Francisco Wine Exchange. —M.S.

**88 Viñas del Vero 2007 La Miranda de Secastilla Garnacha (Somon-tano); \$15.** Sweet and full of raspberry aromas, foresty scents and sandalwood. Overall it's a well-made, intriguing Grenache with a fleshy, sturdy body and deep cherry, berry and chocolate flavors. It's a bit tannic, but that only helps the structure. Finishes nicely, with dry spice and vanilla notes. Imported by San Francisco Wine Exchange. —M.S.

**88 Volver 2008 Tempranillo (La Mancha); \$16.** Dark as night and thick, with heavy, modern aromas of shoe polish, bacon and ripe, roasted black fruits. The feel is concentrated and healthy, while the flavors run very ripe and dark, with plenty of oak thrown in. Finishes rich, with bacon, resin, black pepper and some burn. Seems more jacked up than its listed 14.5% alcohol. Imported by Fine Estates From Spain. —M.S.

**87 Gonzalez Byass 2006 Finca Moncloa Cabernet Sauvignon-Syrah (Vino de la Tierra de Cádiz); \$35.** A bit earthy and leafy on the nose and palate, with lightweight strawberry and raspberry aromas and flavors. The wine has a clacky, almost metallic feel to it along with hints of tobacco and green bean. Vanilla and sweetness push the finish, which is also slightly green. Hails from Cádiz in southwestern Spain. Imported by San Francisco Wine Exchange. —M.S.

**86 Agricola Falset-Marca 2007 Ètim Old Vines Grenache (Montsant);**



**\$27.** More basic and strained than prior wines from this producer. The nose is rubbery and cheesy at first, with leather and blackberry. Hard, tannic and acidic as well, and only a little softer with airing. Flavors are of snappy, tough cherry and berry, and the finish shows tannic bite. Could improve some with aging; now it's a tough go. Imported by North American Beverage Group. —M.S.

**86 Finca Antigua 2007 Garnacha (La Mancha); \$12.** Kicks off with minty coconut aromas and prune, then a hint of creamy green. The palate shows proper acidity and tannin balance, so the framing for the wine's raspberry flavors is good. Grabby but fresh on the finish, with just enough grapey richness. Imported by MJM Imports. —M.S.

**85 Bodegas Tempore 2005 Viña Centuria Garnacha (Vino de la Tierra del Bajo Aragón); \$17.** Rusty in hue, with mature, slightly old aromas of leather, gym bag, dried leaves and mature berry. The palate has depth and concentration, while the flavors are herbal and run toward baked black cherry and tobacco. Caramel and mature fruit flavors vie for control of the roasted finish. Imported by RV Distributors. —M.S.

**85 Grandes Vinos y Viñedos 2005 Corona d'Aragón Reserva (Carriñena); \$18.** Quite an oaky wine, with aromas of BBQ, hickory, roasted plum and spice. The body is full but scratchy, with additional oak manifesting itself in the form of baked, rooty, vanilla flavors that override the wine's simple but quiet fruit content. Finishes dark and toasty, with coffee, mocha and vanilla flavors. Imported by Great Wines & Vineyards. —M.S.

**85 Spartico NV Organic Wine Tempranillo (Utiel-Requena); \$12.** A clean, nice, regular Tempranillo with normal black cherry and berry aromas that offer hints of rubber and bacon. The palate is tannic and grabby but balanced for the most part, with pure, basic blackberry and cherry flavors. Modest in its scope, but fresh and untainted. Imported by Natural Merchants LLC. —M.S.

## SPAIN WHITE WINES

### RÍAS BAIXAS

**89 Dom Bardo 2008 Albariño (Rías Baixas); \$16.** Delicious and ready to drink. The nose brims with lemon peel, minerality, saline and natural vanilla. In the mouth, it's healthy and ready to go, with citrusy lead flavors along with requisite green apple. Still fresh and crisp despite having been released a year ago. A wine to enjoy immediately. Imported by Fine Estates From Spain. —M.S.

**89 Terras Gauda 2009 Abadia de San Campio Albariño (Rías Baixas); \$20.** Lemon, apple blossom and honey aromas make for a correct, attractive bouquet. Meanwhile, the palate is typically crisp and vibrant, with cutting acids that push the pineapple and citrus flavors to a point. Long and exact on the finish, and overall there's not an ounce of flab to this streamlined white. Imported by Aveniu Brands, Inc. —M.S.

**88 La Cana 2009 Albariño (Rías Baixas); \$16.** Smooth, fresh aromas suggest apple blossoms and sea air. The palate offers a proper zesty mouthfeel, zingy acidity, natural creaminess and nice flavors of green apple, sour melon and pineapple. At the end, lemony zap and lemongrass grace the finish. Imported by Fine Estates From Spain. —M.S.

**87 Don Olegario 2009 Albariño (Rías Baixas); \$22.** Pungent and sweaty smelling on first blush, almost suggesting Verdejo or Sauvignon Blanc. It remains oily and nettled on the nose, with sharpness. Sooner rather than later it softens, unveiling flavors of green melon, passionfruit and citrus. And the finish goes out with snap, orange and grapefruit. Potent for the variety. Imported by Kobrand. —M.S.

**86 Pazo de Barrantes 2008 Pazo Barrantes Albariño (Rías Baixas); \$19.** Husky on the nose but mostly it comes across as wild, with jumpy, loud pear, melon and apple aromas. The mouth is spunky and all over the map, while flavors of tangy yellow fruits carry an acidic, herbal twinge and even a grassy quality. Lacks perfect poise but it can't be called timid or dull.

Imported by Maisons Marques & Domaines USA. —M.S.

### RIOJA

**89 Finca Allende 2007 Allende (Rioja); \$36.** Yellowing to the eye, with waxy vanilla aromas along with toasty lemon and apple scents. For an '07 it's hanging in well even if it's creamy and rich, with banana and lemon cream pie flavors. Best to drink now; 70% Viura and 30% Malvasia. Imported by Fine Estates From Spain. —M.S.

**89 Muga 2009 Barrel Fermented (Rioja); \$16.** Clean lines and fresh, oak-tinged aromas is what this Viura (with 10% Malvasia) is all about. The nose starts with lemon, green apple and a spot of vanilla, while the juicy palate brings bright white fruits, toasty oak and smoke. Not overly complex but not rudimentary or dull. A nice food wine and probably the best barrel-fermented white from Muga we've tried. Imported by Fine Estates From Spain. —M.S.

**88 Finca Nueva 2008 Viura (Rioja); \$15.** From Miguel Angel de Gregorio of Finca Allende, this is a nice, thorough, creamy white with aromas of white fruits, vanilla and straw. The palate has spiced peach, apple and pear flavors, and the finish is exceedingly creamy and deep. Shows elegance and adequate power, but needs to be drunk soon. Imported by Fine Estates From Spain. —M.S.

**88 Marqués de Murrieta 2005 Capellania (Rioja); \$26.** For those who like an old-school, oxidized style of white Rioja (think López de Heredia), Murrieta's Capellania is up your alley. The nose is almost like Sherry in its creamy, maderized state, while the palate is low in power, with coconut and lemon flavors. Finishes soft, with vanilla. A unique, identifiable white wine that's not for everyone. Drink now. Imported by Maisons Marques & Domaines USA. —M.S.

**88 Sierra Cantabria 2008 Organza (Rioja); \$29.** Broad, bold and buttery, with aromas of toasted white peach, flower blossom, vanilla and mild oxidation. The blend is 65% Viura with Malvasia and white Garnacha, and overall it's a round, stout, creamy wine with apple, vanilla and toasty, resinous flavors and finishing notes. A little heavy and sticky but nice for barrel-



aged white Rioja. Imported by Fine Estates From Spain. —M.S.

## RUEDA

**91 Shaya 2008 Habis Old Vines Verdejo (Rueda); \$30.** Butter, toast and resinous aromas tell you immediately that it's barrel fermented, but unlike some of the competition, this wine manages to hold onto its core of green apple, white peach and pear without letting the oak interfere. Excellent with food, and it improves rapidly with each ten-minute interval. A great example of oak-aged Verdejo. Drink now. Imported by Fine Estates From Spain. —M.S.

**90 José Pariente 2009 Verdejo (Rueda); \$23.** Fresh, perky, sweaty and citric on the nose, which all creates a textbook bouquet. The palate is slightly spritzy, with flavors of passionfruit, pineapple and sweet white grapefruit. Fresh yet a little fleshy, with a long, zesty finish. Drink as soon as possible to capture the essence of a fine vintage. Imported by Grapes of Spain. —M.S.

**90 Shaya 2009 Old Vines Verdejo (Rueda); \$15.** As far as value-priced Ruedas go, this is at the top of the heap. The nose is forward, clean as glass and not too pungent or demanding. Solid as can be across the tongue, with green fruit flavors that shine and don't force the issue. Crystalline and pure from start to finish. Imported by Fine Estates From Spain. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

**89 Cuatro Rayas 2009 Viñedos Centenarios Verdejo (Rueda); \$18.** Pungent, grassy and ultrafresh, with citric aromas and textbook scents of wild grass, nettles and passionfruit. The palate is similar, with passionfruit, green melon and citrus front and center. The feel is wet and flashy, and overall this is a very nice wine to match with salads, fish and the like. Imported by The Artisan Collection. —M.S.

**88 Emina 2009 Verdejo (Rueda); \$11.** Crisp, clean and nice on the nose, with a hint of white pepper. The palate is round and not overly acidic, making it friendly and endowed with mass appeal. Flavors of green melon and citrus are smooth and not too demanding, while the finish is easy and clean. A welcome entry into the land of Rueda and its Verdejo. Imported by Vinos Libres. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

## Pairings *Continued from page 72*

*¾ cup all-purpose flour*

### For the garnishes

*6 fresh figs, sliced in half lengthwise, optional*

*6 to 12 sprigs lavender, optional*

For the fig sauce and lavender chili ice cream recipes, go to [WineMag.com/southafricansafari](http://WineMag.com/southafricansafari)

**To prepare the puddings:** Grease six (1-cup) ramekins very well with soft butter. With a whisk, beat together the yolks, eggs and sugar until well blended and pale in color, about 2 minutes.

Melt the chocolate and butter gently in a double boiler over simmering water. Stir with a whisk or spatula to ensure that it is completely smooth. (You can also melt it in the microwave, but be careful that it does not burn.) Remove from the heat and slowly add the chocolate mixture to the egg mixture, whisking until smooth.

Sift the flour over the batter and fold it in. Divide the mixture evenly among the buttered ramekins. They will be about ¾ full. (The batter will be pourable now but will firm up as the ramekins chill, so pour into the ramekins before mixture firms. The batter will rise as it bakes and fill the ramekins.)

Cover the ramekins with plastic, but don't let it touch the batter. (You can put them into a baking pan and cover the pan if you like). Chill 6 hours or overnight.

**To finish the puddings:** Heat the oven to 350°F and bake the puddings for about 15 to 20 minutes, or until the centers start to dome slightly and a sugar crust forms. Let cool for 2 to 4 minutes in the ramekins. Turn out carefully by running a knife around the inside edge of the ramekins to loosen the puddings. Then place a dessert plate on top of one ramekin, and holding it on tightly, flip it over, lifting off the ramekin and allowing any leaking pudding to remain on the plate. (Do let them cool or they will fall apart, but don't leave them in the ramekins longer than that or the centers might harden.)

**To assemble the dish:** With each pudding on a dessert plate, top with a scoop of ice cream and drizzle the fig sauce over the top. If available, garnish with a fresh halved fig and 1 or 2 lavender sprigs. *Serves 6*

**Wine recommendations:** The full-bodied dark chocolate and plum character of the Fairview 2007 Primo Pinotage is an apt cohort to the rich chocolate and spice of the dessert. **MF**

## CORRECTIONS

In the September issue Destinations story on Ann Arbor, a menu including stone-grilled pizzas and corned beef sandwiches was mistakenly attributed to Arbor Brewing Company; the Arbor people were kind enough to point out that those items are available at Corner Brewery in Ypsilanti.

In the August issue on page 90, the blend for the Aneluna 2006 Celebración Reserve was presented incorrectly. It is 60% Cabernet Sauvignon and 40% Merlot.

In the July issue on page 99, the importer of Aneluna 2005 Grand Reserve Pasionado (Mendoza); \$50 was listed incorrectly. The correct importer is San Francisco Wine Exchange.

In the July issue Buying Guide, an incorrect price was listed for the 98 point Bouchard Père & Fils 2007 Montrachet. The correct retail price is \$757.

In the September issue Spirits Buying Guide, three of the names of the reviewed Bourbons were presented incorrectly. The full, correct reviews are below.

**95 Elijah Craig 12-Year-Old Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey (Heaven Hill Distilleries, Louisville, KY, U.S.); 47% abv, \$29.** Deep color, medium-to-heavy feel. Strong, sweet fragrance with wood and spice tones. Butterscotch candy flavors, so strong I almost hear cellophane unwrapping, are echoed by some oak, caramel and vanilla. Smooth, not too much alcohol fire. Mellow, long finish with a touch of herbal and anise notes.

**95 Parker's Heritage Collection Golden Anniversary Bourbon (Heaven Hill Distilleries, Louisville, KY, U.S.); 50% abv, \$150.** Extremely well balanced—it's complex but no single element stands out. Flavors are of caramel, burnt orange peel, toastiness and oak. Medium body, silky and long finish, with the right amount of bite, lingering aniseed note. Highly versatile.

**94 Maker's 46 Kentucky Bourbon Whiskey (Maker's Mark Distillery, Loretto, KY, U.S.) 47% abv, \$35.** The nose finds supersweet deep caramel candy and almond extract, but don't be fooled. On the tongue, it's punch-in-the-nose dry and biting. Best served on ice, which takes down the burn and lets the pronounced woody flavors come through: lots of oak, strong tea and cigar tobacco.



## Spirits

### CITRUS VODKAS

**N**arrowing the scope of this month's vodka reviews was a challenge. These days, vodka is distilled from not just potatoes and grain, but also materials such as grapes, maple sugar, even milk. It's made just about anywhere, and it comes in a dizzying spectrum of flavors.

But citrus-flavored vodkas have become a staple in the cocktail world, and so the compass needle settled there.

Discovering the wide range of citrus flavors was a particular delight of this tasting. The spectrum tilted from light and fresh to deep and ripe. I felt like I'd been handed a virtual fruit bowl: the vodkas reflected not just orange or lemon, but Mandarin orange, Clementine, blood orange and tangerine; Meyer lemon and citron and Buddha's-hand citrus. (I ran to a grocer to scoop up exotic fruit so I could learn to tell apart the real-life inspirations.) Some flavorings were more reminiscent

of delicate peels or slightly bitter pith; others clearly echoed the bigger, juicier flavors of the fruit itself.

In the end, two very different citrus vodkas stood out. The first was Absolut Citron, a Swedish vodka with a crisp, classic profile and a lingering lemon finish. The second was a fragrant, full-flavored Mandarin Blossom vodka made by California artisan distiller Hangar One.

Which brings me right back to the incredible diversity in vodkas now: one is made by a global conglomerate perhaps best known for its cool, iconic advertising campaign, and the other is made by hand-picking 50 pounds of blossoms, just to perfume a single bottle, clearly a passionate endeavor. Two very different approaches and products, and both are very much worth a try. If that's not enough to make you want to celebrate, how about this: October 4 is National Vodka Day.

—Kara Newman

**98 Absolut Citron (Absolut Spirits, Åhus, Sweden); 40% abv, \$24/1000 ml.** Features a bright, pleasantly familiar orange-lemon lollipop scent and fresh, clean and brisk flavors, with most of the lemon in the finish. Balanced, with the right amount of alcohol bite. A sure classic for vodka tonics.

**97 Hangar One Mandarin Blossom (Hangar One Distillers, Alameda, CA, U.S.); 40% abv, \$35.** The deep, sweet orange and honeyed-floral fragrance is the first signal this vodka will be special. The flavors are clean and brisk, followed by a strong bite and honey and tangerine notes. It finishes sweet, with faint floral and vanilla notes coaxed out over ice.

**92 Belvedere Orange (Polmos Zyrardow, Poland); 40% abv, \$40.** Pleasantly aromatic, with punchy orange blossom and lime candy notes. An initially neutral flavor gives way to a touch of sweetness. It finishes smooth, with a lingering hint of orange.

**92 Finlandia Grapefruit Fusion (Altia Corp., Helsinki, Finland); 37.5% abv, \$19.** Opens with a fruity, slightly overripe aroma, very close to true grapefruit. The flavors of pomelo and lychee are more dry than sweet, finishing with a touch of anise and moderate bite.

**92 Van Gogh Oranje (Van Gogh Vodka, Dirkzwager Distilleries, Schiedam, Holland); 40% abv, \$27.** The sweet, high but slightly orange-soda ersatz scent accurately reflects the equally sweet and intensely orange taste of this vodka. Because it finishes smooth, with rounded orange and tangerine notes and a Cognac-like, warming touch of honey, it's addictively sippable.

**91 TRU Organic Lemon (TRU Organic Spirits, Los Angeles, CA, U.S.); 35% abv, \$37.** Eco-advocates will love that the packaging is carbon-negative. But how's the liquid inside? Subtle and lovely. It's one of the few vodkas with a hint of pale yellow tint, as well as a slightly viscous body. The scent is light, natural, and lemon zest-y. The flavors also are on the subtle side, hinting at orange blossom, and tapering to lemon peel on the finish. This vodka would blend particularly well into sour-based cocktails.

**91 Absolut Mandarin (Absolut Spirits, Åhus, Sweden); 40% abv, \$24/1000 ml.** Luscious and perfumy, with Christmas clementine and vanilla aromas. However, there's far more orange on the nose than on the palate: a big alcohol bite comes first, followed by neutral flavor with just a suggestion of orange, and a floral finish.

**91 SKYY Infusions Citrus (Skyy Spirits, San Francisco, CA, U.S.) 35% abv, \$19.** Bright, lemon-lime soda aromas, a touch ersatz. The pleasant flavor is reminiscent of sweet lemonade, finishing with a surprising herbal note. It braced up further over ice.

**90 Finlandia Lime Fusion (Altia Corp., Helsinki, Finland); 37.5% abv, \$19.** Despite a faint lime-lollipop scent, the flavor of this vodka tilted more toward lemon than lime, with perhaps a touch of lime-leaf essence. The subtle flavor and light feel would make for a polished, high-end cocktail.

**90 Smirnoff Twist of Orange (Smirnoff Co./Diageo, Norwalk, CT, U.S.); 35% abv, \$17.** True fruit fragrance of orange peel oils, tangerine and a touch of lemon. Restrained and light on the palate, with most of the orange on the lingering finish.

**89 Orange V (Dynamic Beverages, Westport, CT, U.S.); 38% abv, \$26.** Crystal clear appearance, despite the striking orange bottle, and slightly viscous body. Nothing subtle here: get ready for big, sweet, Orange Crush aromas mirrored by sweet, absolutely huge orange flavors. While it was too sweet neat, almost like a liqueur, it gained more bite and structure over ice, and finished with a touch of lemon/citron. Very sippable.

**88 Finlandia Tangerine Fusion (Altia Corp., Helsinki, Finland); 37.5% abv, \$19.** The flavors are more reminiscent of pear than orange, and lead to a mouthwatering finish, with just the right amount of bite to balance it out. Juicy, almost too overripe tangerine scent.

**87 Stolichnaya Citrus (S.P.I. Group, Russia); 35% abv, \$25.** The fragrance is sweet and like lemonade. Initially neutral flavor gives over to alcohol bite, and then a powerful, lingering bitter lemon finish. Probably would be good in a lemon drop, or cocktail that adds some sweetness to balance out the bite.

**87 Belvedere Citrus (Polmos Zyrardow, Poland); 40% abv, \$40.** High, sugary, slightly floral scent reminiscent of gumdrops or lemon-lime soda. Although this vodka starts with a neutral flavor and faint lemon-lime finish on the tongue, it's quickly overwhelmed by wallop of alcohol bite and a touch of bitterness.



# Beer

## LAST OF THE LAGERS

**O**ctober is one of those funny months, when you can still remember summer's blazing heat while fall warns you of the chilly days ahead. Some days it's warm and sunny, and perfect for that baseball outing or weekend barbecue, while others it's cold and windy and you're forced to rake leaves from the yard or winterize the boat. For either occasion, and just about everything in between, the best way to grin and make the most of it is to take a look in the fridge and grab a refreshing lager.

Though they might be left over from your summer entertaining, lagers make excellent early fall transitional beers. Why a lager and not, say, an ale? The main difference is that ales are brewed with

top-fermenting yeast while lagers are brewed with bottom-fermenting yeast. What exactly does that mean for the beer? Lager yeast is inherently more fragile than ale yeasts; it has a lower alcohol tolerance and undergoes fermentation at a lower temperature. The lower temperature leads to a slower, longer fermentation and storage period (hence the name, from the German *lagern*, "to store"). The result is fewer esters and aromas, greater clarity and a more full-bodied beer with a mellow palate that's crisper in character and less fruity than ale.

Given the wide range of lager styles available today, there are plenty of options for every palate's preference, and the reviews for this month's beer buying guide illustrate that point for you.

Prost!

—LAUREN BUZZEO

### 89 Full Sail LTD Series Lager Recipe No. 03 (German Pilsener; Full Sail Brewing Co, OR); 5.6% abv, \$8/6 pack.

There's a slight haze to this light gold-colored beer, with a solid malt backbone along with notes of floral and citrusy hops throughout. The carbonation is fairly assertive and livens up the palate, with softly bitter grassy hop notes dancing alongside toasty malt, orange rind and sweet spice flavors. Flavorful and a bit more complex than other offerings of the same style. Snag what you find of this limited-edition brew while you can.

### 89 Maui Brewing Co Bikini Blonde Lager (Munich Helles Lager; Maui Brewing Co, Hawaii); 4.5% abv, \$9/6 pack cans.

Pours a slightly cloudy pale yellow color with a significant head that leaves little lacing but a nice ring. Aromas are medium-intense with lime rind citrus, soft spice and a touch of pineapple. The mouth is lightweight but very satisfying, with strong but not overly assertive carbonation and a crisp maltiness. Not too grainy or bitter, with soft hoppy notes lingering on the finish. An easy-to-drink, very well-balanced lager.

### 88 Coney Island Human Blockhead Tough-as-Nails Lager (American Amber/Red Lager; Shmaltz Brewing Co, NY); 10.0% abv, \$5/22 oz.

You can tell from the rich mahogany color and slight haze that this isn't going to be your typical amber lager. The aromas are a little caramelized and heady, almost like a Scotch ale, with strong caramel, dried figs,

molasses, candied walnuts and raisin cake spice throughout. Big and roasty in the mouth with notes of coffee and roasted malts alongside the notes found in the bouquet. The finish is very long and tinged with hop oils and soft bitterness as well as a bit of an alcoholic bite. A perfect fall brew, strong but clean.

### 88 Full Sail Session Premium Lager (American Pale Lager; Full Sail Brewing Co, OR); 5.1% abv, \$11/11 oz 12 pack.

This brew comes in an adorable little stubby bottle, like Red Stripe, and it just makes you want to love it. Light golden yellow color in the glass with beautiful lacing left behind after the head falls. Aromas of clean grass, softly toasted grains and mild hop citrus fill the bouquet. Clean and balanced on the palate, with nice fresh citrus notes countering the rich malt backbone. The carbonation is mild but appropriate, allowing the nuanced flavors to come through to the dry finish. Flavorful and satisfying but easy to consume and enjoy. **Best Buy.**

### 87 Bohemia Clásica (German Pilsner; Cerveceria Cuauhtemoc Moctezuma, Mexico); 5.3% abv, \$9/6 pack.

Pours a pale straw color with a small head that falls fast. The aromas are faint but clean, with notes of sweet grains, softly floral hops and a hint of yeast. The taste is clean and well balanced, with nice earthy hops adding a touch of bitterness to the finish alongside the grainy malt backbone. A hint of sweet vanilla bean appears on the finish.

Light and thin but not watery; definitely a versatile, food-friendly brew.

### 86 Cable Car Small Batch Lager Beer (American Adjunct Lager; Cable Car Brewing Co, NY); 4.8% abv, \$7/6 pack.

Light straw-colored in the glass. There's a slight metallic note in the bouquet alongside hints of sweet malt. Clean and straightforward in the mouth with an overall light flavor profile, offering hints of citrus and more sweet grain flavors. Light bodied and easy to drink with a clean finish; an excellent session beer. **Best Buy.**

### 85 R.J. King Wingwalker Lager (American Pale Lager; R.J. King Wingwalker Brewing Co, NY); 4.5% abv, \$7/6 pack.

Pours a very light gold color with a thick head that falls fast but leaves decent lacing. The aromas are faint, with the slightest suggestions of sweet cereal malt and stone fruit. Crisp and refreshing in the mouth, with notes of apple and soft citrus hops along with a touch of bitterness on the end. Brisk and easy to drink.

### 84 Tap Room No 21 Moe's Backroom Lager (American Pale Lager; Tap Room No 21 Brewing Co, NY); 4.8% abv, \$7/6 pack.

Pale straw in color with a decent head that falls fast. Aromas of sweet biscuit malt, soft citrus and a touch of metallic character unfold in the nose. The carbonation is lively and assertive, and the flavors of Cheerios and husky grains lead through to the crisp, dry finish. **W**

## THE WINE ENTHUSIAST BEER BUYING GUIDE

The Beer Buying Guide is a summary of recent detailed evaluations and product ratings of a single reviewer, Assistant Tasting Director Lauren Buzzee. Every tasting note is accompanied by a rating. Also noted are the full name of the product, beer style, alcoholic strength expressed as percent alcohol by volume, producer's name, and the suggested/average U.S. retail price. If price cannot be confirmed, an \$NA (not available) will be printed. Prices are for the bottle size or packaging indicated.

### ABOUT THE SCORES

The numerical ratings correspond to quality in the following manner:

<b>Classic 98–100:</b>	The pinnacle of quality.
<b>Superb 94–97:</b>	A great achievement.
<b>Excellent 90–93:</b>	Highly recommended.
<b>Very Good 87–89:</b>	Often good value; well recommended.
<b>Good 83–86:</b>	Suitable for everyday consumption; often good value.
<b>Acceptable 80–82:</b>	Can be employed in casual, less-critical circumstances.



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# FINE WINE ON A CIVIL WAR BATTLEFIELD

AGONY AND ECSTASY CONVERGED, AS GREAT BORDEAUX WAS UNCORKED DURING THE BLOODY SIEGE OF PORT HUDSON IN 1863.

BY THOMAS HALE



A few years ago while visiting my favorite Civil War relic store in Baton Rouge, the owner informed me that he was going to be selling some of his private collection of bottles. I collect bottles, so naturally my interest was piqued. To my surprise he pulled out intact wine bottles that he had found in the earthworks of the fort at Port Hudson. And such bottles! Château Lafite, Château St. Julien, Château Laroze and a half-bottle of Sauterne. All were identified by the raised glass appliqué (wine seals) on the bottles' shoulders.

These bottles were rare. Mike Russell, the author of *The Collector's Guide to Civil War Period Bottles and Jars*, (Russell Publications), had told me that in his thirty years of digging Civil War camps and battlefields, he had never found a bottle that was intact from lip to base, with the producer's seal.

My imagination ran riot at the thought of these fine wines being opened during what was clearly an excruciating ordeal.

Port Hudson, located thirty miles north of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and its counterpart at Vicksburg, Mississippi, occupied prominent positions, north and south, of the confluence of the Red River with the Mississippi. During the Civil War, the Red River was a virtual supply line from the West, providing the Confederacy with food and materials. A great deal was at stake when the Union assaulted both forts in May, 1863.

Future President Ulysses S. Grant led the assault on Vicksburg while, on May 27th, General Nathaniel Banks' troops attacked Port Hudson. With a mere 7,500 defenders commanded by General Franklin Gardner expected to repulse more than 30,000 Union soldiers, it was predicted to be a short battle. But the Confederate fortifications were impressive, the garrison fought bravely and

many thousands of lives were lost, many of which were the first black troops ever used in American military history. The assault became a siege. Forty-three days later a beleaguered Port Hudson, its food supplies nearly exhausted and its men diseased and out of ammunition, surrendered after receiving news that Vicksburg had fallen on the Fourth of July. Close to 6,000 men died in battle, and 5,000 more died of disease.

The Port Hudson battlefield is an immense area of earthworks, campsites and skirmish zones that contained huge amounts of Civil War artifacts. Relic hunters have flocked to the area for decades. They have found the full gamut of military and personal artifacts: cannonballs, guns, bayonets, buttons and bullets; bottles, coins, gaming pieces and eating utensils. And now, these extraordinary bottles.

The provenance and dating of these bottles is very precise. The garrison surrendered on July 9, 1863 and the army had only occupied the site a few months prior. The wines must have been consumed during this time span. The style of the pontil (the punt), lip and glass imperfections clearly identifies these bottles as being made and sealed prior to 1854, so the wines were nicely aged in July of 1863.

What stories these bottles could tell! Bullets and cannonballs were most likely whizzing over the head of whoever was imbibing the wines. Who drank them, how did they get there, who owned them? Did someone run them past the Union naval blockade? Did one of the wealthy regimental Colonels bring his plantation's private stock into battle?

If so, I wonder: was it due to romantic delusions of the nature of warfare—or an all-too-deep understanding, born of experience, of the horrors of battle and the comforts required to endure? ■



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